CARING AND PAID WORK IN THE LIVES OF LONE MOTHERS

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between caring and paid work in the lives of lone mothers in contemporary Britain as articulated in social research, feminist theory, social policy, and in the interview accounts of twenty lone mothers. Lone mother research is dominated by quantitative methods and tends to privilege orientations to and participation in paid work. In feminist theory, the importance of unpaid work and care has been considered in the domestic labour debate and in the ethic of care perspective. However, the specific position of lone mothers has been under-researched and the political and philosophical implications of the social position of care and unpaid work have been privileged over empirical investigations of the experiences of care-giving. Additionally, in the last decade the sociology of the family has tended to emphasise relationships between adults and neglect relationships between adults and children.

Thus there is a need for research with lone mothers that combines social policy and sociological concerns. This is particularly important given the contemporary policy framework of paid work and care in the lives of lone mothers, as articulated in the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) and Sure Start, where participation in employment is increasingly emphasised as integral to the 'good lone mother'

Based on original empirical research, I argue that lone mothers are engaged in a range of caring practices and while demonstrating an attachment to the paid work ethic, an ethic of care also emerges from their accounts. The lone mothers' have a more sophisticated understanding of the impact of paid work on their lives than evident in social policy. These findings suggest that care and unpaid work need to be conceptualised more broadly in social research and policy to counter the emphasis placed on paid work.

Dedication

For Chico

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Thanks to my Mum, Dad and Nan and to Matthew for his photographic talents and computing skills. Thanks also to Eddie and Atty.

Finally, many thanks to Chico for waiting patiently for this to be finished and for the love, care and support throughout.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of this thesis has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author.

SIGNED:.....DATE:.....

CONTENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BSA	British Sociological Association
CSA	Child Support Agency
D*f*EE	Department for Education and Employment
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
DSS	Department of Social Security
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
FACS	Families and Children Survey
HBAI	Households Below Average Income
IS	Income Support
NDLP	New Deal for Lone Parents
NESS	National Evaluation of Sure Start
PA	Personal Adviser
PLAA	Poor Law Amendment Act
TSOL	Total Social Organisation of Labour
WTC	Working Tax Credit
WFTC	Working Families Tax Credit

Chapter one

Lone mothers in social research

This thesis is about the place of paid work and care in the lives of lone mothers in contemporary Britain. In Britain lone mothers, women with children and without men, have long been defined as a social problem by the state (Lewis 1996). Over time the construction of the nature of the problem of lone motherhood has shifted. At the beginning of the twentieth century, lone mothers were viewed as moral deviants, in the 1950s as victims of circumstance, in the 1970s the material conditions of the lives of lone mothers and their children were emphasised. In the late 1980s and 1990s finances were still a concern, but in terms of the costs lone mothers posed to the welfare state. At this time fears were also expressed by governments for the behaviour of the absent fathers and for the future of the children of lone mothers (ibid.). The construction of the particular problem that lone mothers present determines whether they are defined as 'mothers' or 'workers' by the state. In the 1997, under the Conservative government, tentative steps were made towards promoting paid work for lone mothers in policy. This has been consolidated in the two Labour administrations since 1997, with the introduction of the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP), part of New Labour's wider project of re-establishing the paid work ethic at the centre of the welfare state (Levitas 1997: 4) and has been accompanied by the construction of paid work as integral to the identity of the 'good lone mother'. Competing policy agendas, as seen partly in the Sure Start programmes, stress the importance of the early years of childhood and the heavy involvement of parents in their lives of their children.

For lone mothers the issue of whether to combine paid work and caring activities, and, if so, how to achieve this, may be felt particularly keenly, especially in a political climate where the importance of paid work to being a 'good lone mother' is emphasised. In this thesis I assess how the relationship between paid work and unpaid work in the lives of lone mothers is articulated and understood in social research, feminist theory, social policy and by lone mothers themselves. I argue

that in social research, theory and social policy, insufficient attention has been given to the range of caring activities that lone mothers engage in and that the definition of unpaid work needs to be broadened. I also argue that for some lone mothers, the image of paid work in policy neglects their agency and the realties of their lives. These conclusions are supported by an empirical study I conducted with twenty self-defined lone mothers. In this chapter I begin by considering the dominant approaches to the study of lone motherhood in social research, report some of the key findings and argue for an approach to studying lone motherhood that combines policy studies and sociological concerns. In the remainder of the chapter I set out the structure of the rest of this thesis.

Lone mother research

Lone motherhood has had an increasingly high profile as the focus of policy and research over the last forty years (Levitas et al, forthcoming). Much of the social research on lone mothers is driven by social policy concerns; a quantitative approach is often used to investigate areas of lone mothers' lives relevant to the welfare state, for example, employment, housing and health (see Millar 1989, Ford and Millar 1998, Kiernan et al 1998, Rowlingson and McKay 2002). Another central theme in lone mother research is the comparative study of welfare state regimes in different national contexts and again this is usually through quantitative methods regimes (Duncan and Edwards 1997, Lewis 1997, Kilkey 2000, Millar and Rowlingson 2001). Where qualitative methods are used (see Duncan and Edwards 1999), the focus usually remains on issues connected with social policy, for example, the basis of decision-making around entry to paid work. Other research including a consideration of the position of lone mothers encompasses commentaries on New Labour's political project, specific policies, or government publications (see Driver and Martell 1998) and studies of public and political discourses around lone motherhood (see Roseneil and Mann 1996, McIntosh 1996). In this section my aim is not to provide a comprehensive account of all the social research on lone motherhood but to discern the main types of research and key findings. This review enables me to examine what is

known about lone mothers and their children in the UK, (the location for my fieldwork), and to signal where the gaps in the research lie. This sets my empirical research in a wider context and begins to develop themes that will be revisited in chapters five to ten, where I explore my qualitative data generated from interviews with 20 self-defined lone mothers.

Quantitative research and key statistics on lone motherhood

So a good deal of lone mother research is based on quantitative data and in this section I report some of the key findings. Some of this quantitative research is funded directly by government, such as The Families and Children Survey (FACS), which began in 1999 and was then known as the Survey of Low Income Families (Patch 2001: 19). Other government funded surveys also collect data about lone mothers and their children, including the British Household Panel Survey, the National Child Development Study (NCDS) (see Rowlingson and McKay 2002), the Census and the General Household Survey. There is a considerable body of evaluation research, largely funded by the DWP, which presents the results of studies of the New Deal for Lone Parents. This is dominated by quantitative accounts (see Evans et al 2002, Evans et al 2003, Lessof et al 2003), but there are also some qualitative studies (for examples, see Dawson et al 2000, Thomas and Griffiths 2002). Additionally, official administrative data is available. The New Deal Evaluation Database holds administrative data for all participants on the NDLP dating from its national launch in October 1998, and the DWP issues regular statistical reports from this (Evans et al 2003: 13).

In 2000 the number of lone parents was estimated to be 1.75 million, accounting for a quarter of all families with dependent children and 23% of all dependent children (Haskey 2002: 109). The 2001 Census found that 22% of households with dependent children are lone parent households and that 90.5% of lone parent families are women (National Statistics 2003*a*). Of course, the total number of lone parents at any one time will always be an estimate as this is a transitional category. Some parents cease to be officially categorised as lone parents because their children reach 16 years old and leave full time education (or 19 years old if in full time education) or move out, or because the parent forms a new cohabiting

relationship or gets married; other new lone parent families are created through the birth of a new baby, the breakdown of a relationship or the death of one parent. One in three children spend part of their childhood in a one-parent family (Rowlingson and McKay 2002: 1). The NCDS follows all children born in one week in Britain in 1958. By the age of 33, 17% of women in the cohort had experienced lone motherhood and 23% of the mothers had been or were lone mothers (Payne and Range 1998). Figures given for the average duration of lone parenthood vary. The National Council for One Parent Families states, "A one-parent family is now a stage in the life-cycle, lasting about five years" (2000: 2). Kiernan et al (1998: 5) refer to research suggesting the average duration of lone parenthood is three and a half years. Millar and Ridge refer to evidence that suggests half of all lone parents will have left this status within six years of becoming a lone parent (2001: 28).

Lone motherhood is strongly associated with material disadvantage. In 2001/2 53% of lone parents had an income below 60% of the contemporary median, compared to 20% of couple families (Levitas et al forthcoming). Lone parents are also more likely not to have savings than other households; in 2001/2 28% of households reported having no savings, but this was true for 67% of working age lone parent households (National Statistics 2004*b*). The link between poverty and ill health is well-established, so it is unsurprising that statistics show lone mothers suffer a higher rate of ill health than mothers in couple families. In the FACS report of 2002, 8% of couple mothers reported that their health in the previous year had been 'not good', while 15% of lone mothers said the same (DWP 2004*a*). Lone parents also report a higher incidence of long-standing illness or disability among their children than couple parents (Marsh and Vegeris 2003). Lone mother households are more likely to be living in social housing than other household types. In 2001 46% of lone mothers with dependent children lived in social sector housing, 34% lived in owner-occupied property and 19% rented privately. This is in contrast to 13% of couple families who lived in social sector housing and 80% who were owner-occupiers in the same year (National Statistics 2004*b*: 153-4).

47.8% of lone mothers were in some form of paid employment in 2001 (ibid.), though this is slightly lower than the figure of 50.4% from the Labour Force Survey from the same year (DWP 2003*a*). The age of the dependent children impacts greatly on the participation rates of lone mothers in employment, 38% of lone mothers with a child aged under five years old are in employment, but this rises to 60% of lone mothers whose youngest child is aged between five and ten years old (National Statistics 2004*a*). This could also be because lone mothers of younger children tend to be younger themselves and have lower educational qualifications, which may be linked to their lesser propensity to be in paid employment. In total, 56% of lone mothers with dependent children were in paid work in spring 2003, compared with 72% of partnered mothers with dependent children (National Statistics 2004*a*).

Quantitative evaluation studies

There is a large amount of quantitative data on lone motherhood in the form of policy evaluations, which currently tends to look at the impact of the NDLP on the employment rates of lone mothers and reasons lone mothers give for and against participation in the scheme. Early research on the NDLP prototype found that there was a 3.3% decrease in the number of lone parents on income support than would have been expected if the programme had not been running (Hales et al 2000). Subsequent research has suggested that the NDLP is having more impact, but findings vary. It has been estimated that participating in the NDLP increases exits from income support to paid work by 24% over a nine month period, doubling the employment chances of those who take part in the programme (Evans et al 2003: xi). However, "[t]here is a substantial level of flows back from work onto IS [income support] and around 29% return within 12 months"; additionally around 7% of NDLP participants are taking part for the third or subsequent time (ibid. xii). Others have suggested that the NDLP and associated reforms are having less impact on the employment rates on lone mothers. Gregg and Harkness (2003: 1) calculate that 5% of the 11% rise in the employment rate of lone parents between 1992 and 2002 can be attributed to policy changes.

Comparative research

Comparative research examines the treatment of lone mothers in different national contexts (see Kilkey 2000, Duncan and Edwards 1997, Millar and Rowlingson 2001) and is important as it shows how the rights and obligations of lone mothers are constructed differently in different welfare states and can assess the relationship between particular welfare state regimes and the outcomes for lone mothers and their children. In this way the category of the 'lone mother' acts a kind of litmus test for the treatment of women within specific welfare states and is indicative of how the relationship between paid work and care has been constructed for women more broadly (Kilkey 2000: 70). In Kilkey's study, *Lone Mothers Between Work and Care: The Policy Regime in Twenty Countries*, the UK is categorised as producing 'poor mothers' in terms of their activity status and economic well-being, rather than non-poor mothers or poor/non-poor workers (2000: 8).

Comparative research reveals that welfare states are premised on particular assumptions around gender roles and this affects the provisions for and treatment of mothers in different countries (Millar 1996: 99, 110). As Millar goes on to note, a key message from this type of research is that "[g]ender rather than family status is the key variable in understanding the situation of lone mothers" (ibid.: 113). Duncan (1999) and Duncan and Edwards (1999) develop this further by proposing the useful concept 'genderfare', to explain how variations in welfare states reflect variations in both the capital-labour contract and the gender contract. Comparative research shows the importance of using lone mothers as a category of analysis, for example, in exploring how the caring work of a society is distributed, valued and rewarded. Here the emphasis is on the national level rather than on lone mothers' everyday lives and experiences of caring.

Policy commentary and discourses of lone motherhood

This category of research takes in a wide range of literature from sociology, policy studies and political studies, and seeks to analyse the motivations for policy change and the values, ideas, or political philosophies that policies might be based on (for example, Holden 1999, Lund 1999, Barlow and Duncan 2000, Driver and

Martell 2002, Williams and Roseneil 2004). Other work that fits loosely into this category is research that adopts an historical perspective on lone motherhood (see Thane 1978, Kiernan et al 1998, Carabine 2001), discussed below. Lone mothers are also considered from a feminist perspective and this work explores popular, media or political constructions of the lone mother and this informs work on discourses or ideologies of motherhood. Examples of this are found in work of Roseneil and Mann (1996), Silva (1996), McIntosh (1996) and Phoenix (1996).

In recent years less work on the discourses surrounding lone mothers has been produced and this is in line with the declining moral panic around lone motherhood. A number of reasons could be suggested for this decline: the fact that lone motherhood is an increasingly common experience; the ascendancy of moral panics around other categories, for example, paedophiles, immigrants, asylum seekers (Lithman 2004) and, perhaps, New Labour's emphasis on the importance of paid work and 'independence' for lone mothers. While important for charting the social discourses around lone motherhood and the social construction and ideology of the 'good mother', often missing from these accounts are the impact of these constructions on lone mothers themselves.

Qualitative interview research with lone mothers

The last body of work on lone mothers partly addresses this oversight: qualitative interview research with lone mothers. There have been a number of qualitative studies with lone mothers, often examining the relationship between paid work and care in the life of the lone mother (see Duncan and Edwards 1999, Hughes 2004, Spencer 2004, Saunderson and McGarry 2004). Some qualitative interviewing research with lone mothers has been directly funded by government and supplements the quantitative evaluation studies of the NDLP and associated policies. Work here focuses on the use of services, decisions around paid work, experiences of the NDLP and experiences of the client-personal adviser relationship (see Dawson et al 2000, Lewis et al 2000). Other qualitative research with lone mothers is also relevant to policy and challenges particular constructions of how lone mothers make decisions around work and care, namely the implicit idea in much policy that lone mothers act as 'rational economic

women'. The work of Duncan and Edwards (1999) is of central importance here. Duncan and Edwards combine quantitative and qualitative data to investigate how lone mothers from different countries and in different social contexts understand the relationship between the care of their children and paid work. They propose the term 'gendered moral rationality' to describe this relationship and show that different social positionings of lone mothers, such as ethnicity, social class, and the area they live in, engender different discourses of the appropriate relationship between the care of children and participation in paid work. Duncan and Edwards formulate three main types of 'gendered moral rationality' based on their interview data: 'primarily mother', where full time care of children by the mother herself is privileged over any perceived benefits of paid work; 'primarily worker', where paid work is seen as separate from the identity of 'mother' and as a need the lone mother has; and 'mother/worker integral', where financial provision for children through participation in paid work is seen as a moral responsibility (1999: 119-20). The qualitative research for my project took place in a predominately white, working class, and peripheral estate made up of social housing. In Duncan and Edward's study it was found that lone mothers living in these kind of areas tended to hold a 'primarily mother' gendered moral rationality (1999: 122), which is mirrored in my findings. In terms of policy, these local variations in the understanding of the appropriate relationship between paid work and motherhood, lead Duncan and Edwards to suggest that the policy of welfare *to* work, should be replaced with a more locally sensitive policy of welfare *and* work (1999: 298).

This study is of central importance as it moves away from treating lone mothers as an homogenous category, the criticism made of some lone mother research, to stress the importance of social characteristics (e.g. class and ethnicity) and the social context in which the lone mother lives. Indeed, Duncan and Edwards' work was partly motivated by a desire to move away from treating lone mothers solely as a taxonomic group. Taxonomic groups are usually studied via quantitative data, such as official surveys, as discussed above. This means that the knowledge produced tends to be descriptive and representative, but weak on explaining processes (Duncan and Edwards 1999: 6, Duncan 2000*a*: 5). By

combining quantitative and qualitative data, Duncan and Edwards go beyond merely describing the phenomenon of national variations in the employment rates of lone mothers, and suggest a concept, 'gendered moral rationalities', to explain why this occurs and how mothers make decisions around the labour market. Although the work of Duncan and Edwards does move on from research which studies lone mothers solely through quantitative datasets, its aim of assessing the appropriateness of New Labour policy means that it remains in the 'paid work versus care' paradigm, that much lone mother research inhabits, though the logic of New Labour is challenged.

In the first part of this chapter I have presented the main categories of lone mother research, key findings and suggested that research tends to be dominated by quantitative methods and with a concern for the relationship between paid work and care in the lives of lone mothers. Research does not only generate knowledge about lone mothers but also has a role in constructing and producing the category of lone mother, and has tended to do so in ways which privilege the paid work/care issue as key for lone mothers. Although there has recently been important work on lone motherhood which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, there remains a need for qualitative research that is able to give a richer and more in-depth account of the lives of lone mothers while taking account of the importance of paid work and care. This is the aim of chapters five to ten where I discuss the findings of my project. This neglect of the everyday lives of lone mothers and the range of caring activities that they engage is not only a feature of research from a social policy perspective but is also replicated in sociological research.

Lone mothers in sociological research

In the 1990s interest in family sociology was renewed as Giddens (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) turned their attentions to this sphere in an attempt to understand wider social changes (Smart and Neale 1999: 5). However, this intervention into family sociology by mainstream social theorists has mainly been in terms of interest in relationships between adults and the shifting nature

and experience of intimacy (Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards 2002: 198). In this emphasis on relationships between adults the relationships between parents and children have been marginalised and "significant social experiences centred on childrearing activities" are little studied (ibid.). Ribbens has argued that the "maternal worlds"[1], of mothers have generally been neglected by sociology and she advocates that analyses should be developed which aim to understand the everyday experiences of mothers (Ribbens 1994: 4, Bell and Ribbens 1994: 254). Bell and Ribbens argue that such studies should research the worlds of mothers on their own terms and "not through the prisms of social policy agenda, public-world language and implicit public-world evaluations" (1994: 254-5).

So the lack of research on lone motherhood beyond the care/paid work dualism is part of this general neglect of the social worlds of mothers. The emphasis on policy orientated research and the lack of interest in lone mothers from a more sociological viewpoint has meant the official agenda of what *should* be important to lone mothers (decisions around paid work) has been privileged over what lone mothers might actually say is important in their lives in research from other perspectives. As my research project developed, a process described in chapter four, I attempted to use an approach to interviewing lone mothers that, while encompassing decision-making around paid work, also attempted to move beyond this to explore lone mothers' experiences of care, and the range of caring relationships and practices they are involved in.

Definitions: lone mothers and younger mothers

Lone mothers

Before moving on to describe how this orientation to lone mother research, which combines sociological and social policy approaches, informed the structure of this thesis, I want to explain the use of two terms in what follows: lone mothers and younger mothers. In official literature lone motherhood often appears to be defined in a fairly unproblematic way. For many years the official definition of a

[1] In the following chapters I prefer to use the term 'social worlds' of mothers, to emphasise interest in the social contacts and networks of lone mothers.

one-parent family was taken from the *Finer Report* (DHSS 1974), sometimes referred to as the 'Finer definition', (Haskey 2002: 47-8) which states,

> "A one-parent family is defined as 'a mother or father living without a spouse (and not cohabiting) with his or her never-married dependent child or children aged either under 16 or from 16 to (under) 19 and undertaking full-time education'" (DHSS 1974)

More recently the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has defined a *lone* parent in a similar way, "We use *lone parent* to mean a person who does not live with a partner and has at least one child under 19, as long as Child Benefit is still in payment for that child" (DWP 2002). In both these descriptions, a one-parent family or a lone parent is presented as fairly easy to define. However, in social research it is clear that these apparently straight-forward terms might be obscuring more complex situations. In research with 'fatherless families', Marsden noted that this term includes "...a whole spectrum of possible relationships and sets of living circumstances" (1973: 4). In contemporary Britain there is an increasing fluidity and instability of personal relationships and forming and sustaining partnerships is increasingly difficult (see Furedi 2002) and people's lives do not necessarily fit with the neatness of bureaucratic categories. This may be the case particularly at the beginning and end of relationships, where the definition of 'lone motherhood' is difficult to apply and may even be unclear to the people involved (Rowlingson and McKay 2002: 69). In response to these problems of definition, most survey research in this field is now based on subjective identification with the term 'lone mother' (Rowlingson and McKay 2002: 68)[2] and in my fieldwork I did not use any objective criteria to operationalise the concept lone mother, but relied on self-definition. The personal relationships of lone mothers have received little in-depth research attention, and this is indicative of the neglect of the social worlds of lone mothers. Where the range of relationships that a supposedly lone mother could be involved in is recognised, this is usually acknowledged briefly to make way for the focus to return to issues of paid work/care (for example, see Kilkey 2000: 68-9). The intimate relationships that lone mothers in this study are involved in are considered in

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[2] This means that some of the reported growth in lone parenthood "...could therefore be partly a result of people increasingly defining themselves as living without a partner even though, on objective criteria, they may appear to have a partner" (Rowlingson and McKay 2002: 68).

chapter nine.

In addition to the range of living circumstances that the term lone mother might include, the possibility that other markers of social difference might be more important than relationship status for mothers has been put forward. Duncan has suggested that class may be a more important factor:

> "... the statistical category of 'lone mother/parent' may well turn out to be a statistical red herring, or put more precisely, a 'chaotic concept' (cf. Sayer 1992). Thus poor lone mothers living in a peripheral housing estate in a declining local labour market will probably have more in common with similar partnered mothers than with better-off middle-class lone mothers living in suburban areas in growing local labour markets" (2002: 555).

While acknowledging these problems with the term lone mothers and at times making them the focus of study, I argue that the continuation of 'lone mother' research remains a legitimate research activity. The poverty associated with 'lone motherhood' and the consequences of the official label of 'lone mother' do justify the continuation of 'lone mother' research, as long as the complexities of using this term are recognised.

Lone mothers, lone parents and lone fathers

As described above, the vast majority of lone parents are women and although official literature tends to refer to the "apparently gender neutral 'lone parent'", this masks important gender issues (Duncan 2002: 555-6). As comparative research demonstrates, gender is the key variable in understanding the situation of lone mothers (Millar 1996: 113); women are socially assigned the work of caring and this tends to be devalued. Other research has shown that as a group lone fathers tend to be in a different structural position to lone mothers; for example, lone fathers are less likely to be living in rented accommodation than lone mothers; a higher proportion of lone father are divorced than lone mothers and they are more likely to be owner-occupiers (National Statistics 2004*d*). This suggests that lone fathers should be researched separately. These reasons, in addition to the fact that all my interviewees were female[3], mean that I tend to refer to lone mothers in this study.

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[3] Also, I was told by a local childcare worker, whom I met during my fieldwork, that there was

Younger mothers

In the course of my fieldwork I interviewed twenty self-defined lone mothers, twelve of whom were aged under 25. In the empirical chapters, chapters five to ten, I refer to these women as the 'younger mothers'. In part this is an arbitrary division, but one which allows me to signal when an experience or attitude of these women, differs from the 'older' group. This is a cut-off point that has been used in other research (for example, see Kidger 2002) and work by Hobcraft and Kiernan (2001) found that the widest gap in adult social exclusion was between women who became mothers under the age of 23 and those who became mothers after this age. Although this is not the same cut-off point employed here, it does suggest that mothers in their early 20s may have different experiences to 'older' mothers.

The outline of the thesis

In this chapter I have argued that the social worlds of lone mothers have been neglected in favour of a social policy agenda and stated that the fieldwork for this project aimed to combine both policy studies and more sociological approaches to lone motherhood, for example, in the case of the latter, an interest in the place of home in the lives of lone mothers. I have also argued that in policy the impact of paid work is not understood in terms of the lives of lone mothers and argued that more research attention needs to be given to their caring lives. I have outlined the main approaches to the study of lone motherhood, described some of the key findings and considered some problems of definition in research on this topic. In the final section of this chapter, I outline the structure of the rest of the thesis.

Having considered the place of lone mothers in social research, the focus in chapter two shifts to the theoretical terrain as I examine the position of lone mothers in two main bodies of feminist writing on unpaid work: the domestic labour debate and the ethic of care perspective. I argue that little attention is given in these literatures to lone mothers specifically, but that there are elements

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only one lone father living in the area.

of both literatures which can be used to support the value of care or unpaid work during a period where the paid work ethic dominates. However, there are also problems with the idea of care here and I argue that insufficient attention is given to the practices of care, the daily experiences of caring, and to the position of lone mothers specifically.

In chapter three I move onto the treatment of lone mothers' involvement in caring and paid work in policy. This chapter begins with a consideration of the treatment of lone mothers historically, from the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act onwards. Here, I show that lone mothers have been treated differently in policy on the basis of their route to lone motherhood and that a moral hierarchy of lone mothers operated, founded on a particular sexual morality. In the twentieth century the term 'lone mother' emerged and moves were made towards treating different 'types' of lone mothers equally, and the primary role for lone mothers was caring for their children, not engagement in paid work. With the election of New Labour in 1997, the basis of the hierarchy of lone mothers has shifted and is now rooted in participation (or not) in paid work. The second half of the chapter examines this contemporary construction of the 'good lone mother' in policy and the policy framework of paid work and care through an analysis of the New Deal for Lone Parents and the Sure Start programme. I argue that the increasing emphasis placed on parental employment as a route to social inclusion ignores the realities of the lives of lone mothers and neglects their agency and values around paid work and care.

Chapter four describes the methodology of my research project which was developed to overcome these oversights and problems with lone mother research, in the theorising of paid and unpaid work and in the policy framing of lone mothers' lives. I describe how the interviews were conducted and the methodological issues raised by the process of going into the field. I designed an interview schedule that included questions on paid work, but also considered the experience, understandings and place of care in the lives the interviewees, as well as allowing a space for their own concerns to be articulated. In this chapter I also discuss the issues raised by paying interviewees to take part in research, the

implications of which are seldom considered in qualitative research.

In chapters five to ten I discuss the findings of my empirical research. Chapter five supplies relevant background detail on the interviewees, by examining their past experiences of paid work and reasons for leaving employment, as 19 out of the 20 lone mothers were not in formal employment. Chapter six and seven are arranged around the three themes by which paid work is promoted by New Labour in the NDLP. By exploring the lone mothers' understandings of paid work in terms of its financial, moral and social inclusion dimensions, I argue that New Labour use an abstract notion of paid work which is not adequately situated in the practical realities of the lives of lone mothers.

In chapter eight the focus moves to the factors that the interviewees considered relevant in shaping their (re)entry to paid work and I show that for some lone mothers paid work is part of a *wider life project*, a transition that will be made once other areas of life have been settled.

Chapter nine explores the place of home, family, friends and partners in the lives of lone mothers. These are areas that tend to be neglected in lone mother research. Home emerged as important in the lives of lone mothers in the course of the fieldwork. The social networks of lone mothers are considered and this illustrates the complexity of the category 'lone mother'; that it can refer to a range of living arrangements and types of relationships with (ex)partners. In this chapter I also consider the different experiences of the interviewees, based on their status as an insider or outsider in the area.

In these chapters five to nine the complexities of lone mothers' attitudes to be paid work and care are revealed. For instance, all of the women seem to reflect a belief in the paid work ethic, although they are not engaged in paid work. Some of the women rejected the notion that caring for children and housework should be seen as a job or a form of work, but also felt that paid work was not appropriate at this time of their child's life. Instead, many of the interviewees referred to the importance of participating in training courses as a way to have 'something to do'

and to fill the gap between being at home and entering paid work. For some interviewees, this can be interpreted as a search for a kind of community-based social inclusion that is often overlooked in policy. So in chapter ten, I consider the meanings and functions of training for lone mothers.

Chapter eleven brings the thesis to a close and I consider the implications of my empirical findings for lone mother research, for policy and for the theorising of paid and unpaid work.

Chapter two

Lone mothers, paid work and care

In chapter one I discussed the range of lone mother social research and argued that the caring activities that lone mothers are engaged in have not been adequately researched. In this chapter I turn to the theoretical literature on the spheres of paid and unpaid work. A central concern of this thesis is the contemporary construction of lone mothers as 'workers' and the implications this has for the caring work that lone mothers do and the valuing and understanding of care more widely. For this purpose, in this chapter I critically review two important literatures in the theorising of care, caring, mothering and housework; firstly the domestic labour debate and related work on housework and care from the late 1960s to early 1990s. Secondly, I discuss and evaluate a more recent perspective on care, the ethic of care, as developed by Tronto (1993), Sevenhuijsen (1998) and Williams (1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003).

In discussing these two literatures I argue that elements of the theorising of the position of care in society, the analysis of care and domestic labour as marginalised and devalued activities has relevance for understanding the contemporary construction of lone mothers. However, there are also problems with this material, particularly in the way the everyday experiences of care and meanings of care for lone mothers are overlooked and the lack of attention given to the subject of resources for care, including housing, money and social networks. An analysis of care needs to be informed by an empirical dimension, to capture the experiences of care-giving, the range of caring activities that lone mothers are engaged in and ultimately to show that an emphasis on paid work ignores the importance and necessity of the unpaid work of care and caring and abstracts lone mothers from their social contexts.

The dominance of the paid work ethic and the public sphere

An emphasis by a labour government on the paid work ethic and rates of participation in employment are not new concerns and also reflects the dominance

of the paid work ethic in society. According to Weber, the dominant view of work in society was a consequence of an elective affinity between the spirit of capitalism and the Protestant ethic, resulting in paid work taking a central place in an individual's life and being a measure of success and a crucial source of personal satisfactions (Weber [1930] 1976, Thorn 1972: 93). The distinctions of public and private worth emanate from the (paid) work ethic and it sustains the boundary of the public and private spheres (Tronto 1993: 166). Participation in paid work is participation in the public sphere, associated with freedom and autonomy in Western societies (Sevenhuijsen 1998: 5, Tronto 1993: 135). This rests on a political ideal of the self-sufficient and thus 'independent' citizen in a capitalist economy, but neglects the caring work that sustains this 'independence'. In Britain, it is the participation of men in paid work that has tended to be the focus of government attention and historically there has been less emphasis on the importance of women's participation in paid employment. In the nineteenth century some lone mothers, depending on their route to lone motherhood, were constructed as workers, but since then and until recently lone mothers have been defined as mothers primarily (Lewis 1996).

New Labour's project to reform the welfare state in terms of "work for those who can, security for those who cannot" (DSS 1998*a*: iii), marks a shift then in the treatment of lone mothers, emphasising their potential role as paid workers over their mothering and caring roles. New Labour's concern is not with all adults who are not in paid work but particularly for adults in households where no one of working age is in formal employment, the 'workless households' (Levitas 1998: 146). Land argues that the message to lone parents from New Labour, via the New Deal for Lone Parents is that any job is better than full time care of their own children at home (1999: 138). In the post-second world war settlement of the welfare state, care within the family and at home was seen as a valuable contribution to society and while it wasn't characterised as 'work', it was seen as conferring a legitimate claim to state benefits (Land 1999: 141, Land 2002: 28). Lone parents remain eligible for income support until their children are 16 years old, or 19 if in full time education but there is increased *pressure* to enter paid work and a requirement to attend job centre based work-focussed interviews at

regular intervals (these policy changes are described in more depth in chapter three).

New Labour's concern with the employment rates of lone mothers needs to be located in the wider context of the neo-liberal restructuring of many Western welfare states (Sevenhuijsen 1998: 130). In a comparison of five countries, Rowlingson and Millar argue that the increasing expectation in social policy for lone mothers to enter paid employment reflects a wider shift,

> "...away from a breadwinner model of labour market participation to an adult worker model, which places expectations on all adults including mothers and lone mothers, to be active in the labour market... The UK appears to be at a crossroads from a male breadwinner model to an adult worker model" (2002: 210).

In turn, this reflects the perceived need for increased self-provisioning of welfare, particularly pensions in the context of an ageing population (Lewis 2002: 52). There are two related problems with the shift to an adult worker model. The first is summed up by Lewis, "[t]he problem is that a universalised adult worker model no more fits the social reality than did the male breadwinner model of the past" (2002: 52). In Britain the labour market participation rates of women have risen but the majority of partnered mothers engage in *part time* paid work and do the majority of the caring for children and housework in their households, so the norm might be better described as a one and a half earner model (ibid). Lewis argues that the government shift to treating lone mothers as workers in the late 1990s happened regardless of the fact that most married mothers engage in part time work (2002: 53). The second problem for some lone mothers with the shift to the adult worker model is that the emphasis on paid work overlooks the caring work they engage in. Kingfisher also identifies this,

> "In reconstituting poor women as (male) able-bodied workers and stripping them - discursively, but not practically - of their roles in reproduction, proponents of market-orientated restructuring fail to acknowledge that the market is not purely economic, but fundamentally embedded in cultural, and therefore power, relations" (2002: 48)

For New Labour, paid work is constructed as *the* basis of citizenship and social participation, this has led some commentators to argue that there is too much emphasis on lone mothers as workers, which overlooks the value of care to

citizenship (Lister 2002: 125).

Care and its associated work and activities aren't just of value to citizenship in an abstract way, but are crucial to the maintenance of life and continuance of society. The lack of recognition of the importance of caring work for social reproduction and the interdependence of all in society are key elements of the analysis of care and caring in the domestic labour debate and the ethic of care perspective, respectively. In the next section I review the domestic labour debate and subsequent research, critically evaluating the analysis of housework and care given here and examining what the analysis of care here can contribute to an understanding of the contemporary position of the caring work that lone mothers do.

The domestic labour debate

Much of the writing on care and domestic labour has been concerned with analysing the relationships between the work or activity that goes on in the private sphere of the home and the formal paid work that takes place in the market economy. The roots of this orientation to unpaid work go back to the 1960s and early 1970s and the 'discovery' of the household (Himmelweit 1995) and to the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement, part of the second wave of feminism (Malos 1995: vi). Malos describes how in women's groups at this time questions were being asked about motherhood and domestic labour, such as "why was this work we were doing not seen as real work, and why did the doing of it cut us off from access to social participation and some right to money of our own?" (Malos 1995: vi). This stimulated Marxist feminists to engage with and critique Marx's economic theory (Gardiner 1997: 82). Johnson (1991: 357) argues that Marxist theory emphasised the concepts of "'class', 'labour', and 'alienation' based on productive wage labour, [so that] women become theoretically and politically relevant only when they inhabit the male world of paid work". However, there has not been such a wholesale disregard of women in what we can broadly refer to as the body of Marxist theory. Bebel in *Women in the Past, Present and Future* (1893) and Engels (1985) in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the*

State both consider the position of women in depth (see Jefferson and King 2001). While women have not been analysed solely in relation to paid labour in Marxist theory, the study of domestic labour had been neglected, thus the domestic labour debate in the 1970s can be seen as an attempt to marry the concerns of Marxism and feminism.

The domestic labour debate was concerned with developing an economic analysis of housework rooted in a set of questions about the relationship between domestic labour and capital: "...whether domestic labour creates value of not, whether it produces the commodity labour power or not; whether it is subject to the law of value, whether it is productive or unproductive..." (Molyneux 1979: 21). Himmelweit and Mohun dismissed the debate around whether domestic labour was productive or unproductive, arguing it was an irrelevance as these categories related only to waged labour (1977: 18). They advocated an analysis of domestic labour which understands it as "specific to and part of the capitalist mode of production, as non-value production of directly consumed use-values" (Himmelweit and Mohun 1977: 23-4). Molyneux also rejected the analysis of housework as creating surplus value for capital; she argued that this cannot be the case as the concrete labour in the domestic sphere is not equivalent to the "abstract labour time of commodity production" (1979: 9, see also Himmelweit and Mohun 1977: 27-28). Another dominant argument in the domestic labour debate was that housework provided a subsidy for capital, depressing the wages for paid labourers. Molyneux provides a case against this argument, claiming that a range of "cultural and political conditions" determine the standard of living along with factors such as the level of production and the rate of accumulation (1979: 9-10). For Molyneux, this means that housework "plays a relatively minor role" in determining the value of labour power (1979: 10).

Ultimately, the question of the precise nature of the relationship between domestic labour and capitalist production was never resolved (Jefferson and King 2001: 90-1) and the domestic labour debate became increasingly difficult to follow, particularly for women who wanted to change their lives or develop a strategy of action (Malos 1995: vi). However, it was important that this debate had taken

place. It meant that women's labour in the household was made visible and that it was seen as essential for the reproduction of capitalism (Gardiner 2000: 84, Himmelweit and Mohun 1977: 28). The domestic labour debate meant that the housewife was recognised to be working not only for her family, but also for the maintenance of capitalism (Oakley 1981*a*: 167). Thus questions could be asked about the reasons for the invisibility of women's work in households and the wider interests this served. Crucially the link had been made between production in the public sphere and the work of social reproduction in the private sphere that was the essential support for this.

One aspect of Gardiner's analysis of domestic labour at this time focussed on why domestic labour and childcare continued to be the main responsibility of women and what pressures were acting for or against change in women's economic role in the family (1975: 47). She argued that commodity production doesn't fully provide for worker's needs so domestic labour has been retained by capital to "carry out an important part of the reproduction and maintenance of labour power" (1975: 53). Gardiner anticipates that pressure on capital to socialise domestic labour could come from a perceived need to recruit female workers or for educational reasons, a socialization of childcare, based on a concern with the quality of the next generation of the labour force (1975: 55). Parallels could be drawn between these projections and the motivations behind the New Deal for Lone Parents and Sure Start respectively (see chapter three). Although this Marxist feminist perspective considers the motivations behind the market substitution of domestic labour and therefore the drawing of more women into the labour market, the focus on the significance of domestic labour in relation to the wider system of production means the range of caring activities that women engage in and the meanings and experience of care-giving or the work of social reproduction gets overlooked.

From domestic labour to care

This neglect of the emotional and 'caring' aspects of domestic labour was a central criticism of the domestic labour debate. Domestic labour was represented in terms of women working for their families, and this obscured the "emotional significance" of looking after a home (Graham 1993: 462). In the early 1980s new feminist work on 'caring' was developed; the terminology had shifted away from 'domestic labour' (Graham 1993: 462) and particularly important here was work by Hilary Graham (1983). Graham argued that care should be understood to have a "dual nature", as both labour and love (1983: 16). This asserts the importance of feelings and emotions in care-giving and Graham emphasises the necessity of analysing the subjective dimension of care,

> "Caring cannot be understood objectively and abstractly, but only as a subjective experience in which we are all, for better or worse, involved" (1983: 28).

Graham argues that the lack of recognition of care as both labour and love can be attributed to the disciplinary splitting up of caring into its emotional element, investigated in psychology, and the material dimension, the concern of social policy (1983: 16-17). Graham attempts to bridge this divide by starting from an acknowledgement of the dual nature of care and locates caring as the site where the differentiation of men and women takes place, so that care "defines what it feels like to be a women in a male-dominated capitalist social order... mark[ing] the point at which the relations of capitalism and gender intersect" (1983: 18, 30).

Himmelweit was a contributor to the domestic labour debate in the 1970s. In later writings, like Graham, she is critical of the neglect of care in the domestic labour debate, but Himmelweit's (1995) critique goes further as she argues against the conceptualisation of domestic activities as 'unpaid work'. In feminist thought in the 1970s, the naming of household activities as 'unpaid work' was a strategy to demand more social worth for them, as can be seen in the quotes from Malos, above, and, for some was a way to demand financial rewards for housework (see Dalla Costa and James 1975). Reflecting on the domestic labour debate, Himmelweit contests that the categorisation of domestic activities as 'unpaid work' draws on an idea of 'work' derived from the characteristics of commodity producing manufacturing wage labour, which has had negative consequences for

the analysis of domestic activities (Himmelweit 1995: 1, 5, 6). She argues that it has "reinforce[d] a tendency within the economy to render invisible those domestic activities and needs which do not take a work/consumption form" (1995: 15). In this way the ability to "value the personal and relational aspects of much domestic activity" is lost when these activities are subsumed into a definition of work partly based on the separation of the worker and his/her work (Himmelweit 1995: 6). Himmelweit's analysis highlights the power of the paid work ethic and she suggests that the best way to value care might not have been forcing it into the "pre-existing category of work" (1995: 2). Himmelweit goes on to argue that the increasing use of bought 'substitutes' for the less personal aspects of domestic activities means that the "more personal" domestic activities, such as the care of young children, remain the "...least easily assumed under the dominant notion of 'work' and therefore retain the characteristics of invisibility that used to characterise all unpaid work" (1995: 9).

Although Himmelweit's conceptualisation of work has been criticised for being based on a distorted definition of waged labour (see Gagnier and Duprè 1995), she raises some points for debate on how to value the caring activities that go on in households. Does the strength of the paid work ethic mean that feminists should seek to gain social status for housework and care-giving through the naming of these activities as 'work', or does doing this obscure the emotional aspect of these activities and distort our understanding of care? The naming of housework and care as 'domestic labour' and 'unpaid work' was a significant move in the 1970s, as it recognised the interdependence of production in the public sphere and the activities of social reproduction in the private sphere. Debates as to what counts as 'work' and how to define 'work' tend to quickly become circular and thus don't provide a way of valuing care and caring activities, instead they remain within the concept. One way out this and a route to value care, may be the ethic of care perspective, which positions care as valuable on its own terms and as a potential basis for citizenship, thus side-stepping debates about the nature of 'work'. This will be explored below.

In two papers in the 1990s, Graham (1991, 1993), like Himmelweit, reflects on her earlier work. Graham reassesses the concept of caring in British feminist

research and argues that work in the 1980s was "relatively unaffected by wider currents within feminism" (1991: 74). By this, Graham means that the way class and racial divisions impacted on and shaped patterns of care in families was neglected (1991: 66). In a later paper, Graham extends this critique of the undifferentiated notion of care offered in earlier work to argue that feminist research tends to be based on "heterosexual domestic units", so that "the positions and experiences of those who are not tied into kinship structures based on marriage" are overlooked (1993: 465). Graham continues to argue that a further consequence of this focus is that divisions of sexuality, race and class in terms of access to the informal economy of care are underplayed. However a striking omission here is any reference to the specific position of lone mothers and their particular experiences of care, even though Graham recognises that the emphasis has been on care in "heterosexual units" based on marriage.

Arber and Ginn (1992) also deconstruct the concept of care used in earlier feminist research. Their concern was that the literature on caring had centred on gender, but paid little attention to social class (1992: 619). Arber and Ginn demonstrate that the association of low social class and higher morbidity and mortality rates results in working class women bearing a higher burden of care than their middle class counterparts. Additionally, providing care may be more difficult for working class people due to fewer material resources and finances to ease the task (1993: 621, 622). This is an important analysis of the significance of class and inequality for care-giving and receiving, but is limited by the focus on care of the elderly, ill and disabled. Feminist studies of care in the 1980s tended to follow policymakers' concept of care, so that research was mainly concerned with the informal care of those with additional needs and with the community care policies of the time (Graham 1991: 64, Graham 1993: 462). Arber and Ginn's work informed Innes and Scott's (2003) research with mothers making the transition from full time caring to paid work or further education. Innes and Scott provide qualitative data to illustrate the particular difficulties that women face when caring for children on low incomes.

The contributions of Himmelweit, Graham and Arber and Ginn prompt a

reassessment of the way care had previously been conceptualised and to the way care as a practice has been examined in empirical research. Himmelweit draws attention to the possible differences between paid work and care, Graham argues that race, class and sexuality may shape practices of care and that gender is not the sole social division of importance. Arber and Ginn note the neglect of class and inequality and argue that those with less resources face a higher burden of care, while having less means to cope with this. While these accounts all seek to address the oversights in previous conceptualisations and research on care, none of them identify the neglect of the specific experiences of lone mothers caring for their children, the concern of this thesis. Innes and Scott's research, mentioned above, was based on a small sample and included some lone mothers but their objective was to look at caring experiences in a time of transition.

The ethic of care perspective

From Gilligan to Tronto, Sevenhuijsen and Williams

This section begins with a discussion of the ethic of care as articulated in the work of Tronto (1993), Sevenhuijsen (1998) and Williams (2000, 2001, 2003). In this work the 'ethic of care' provides a way to analyse the position of care in European and North American societies and offers a political strategy by challenging the dominant conception of citizenship. The work of Tronto and Sevenhuijsen has been described as the 'second wave' of work on the ethic of care, which aims to reconcile the tensions between an ethic of care and the ethic of justice (Williams 2003: 12). This moves the debates on from the classic work of Carol Gilligan (1982), where from a psychological perspective the ethic of care was 'discovered' as an alternative moral voice to an ethics based on justice and rights (Tronto 1993: 77-8). Tronto's key problem with Gilligan's arguments is that she reinforces a 'moral boundary', containing the idea of the ethic of care and thus undermining its far-reaching, transformative potential. Tronto argues that Gilligan, along with other earlier conceptions of the ethic of care, understands care in a narrow sense so that the ethic of care is thought of "almost entirely in terms of personal relationships, ignoring the possibility that connections might be to larger units,

such as one's extended family, community, and so forth" (1993: 96). For Tronto, this version of the ethic of care reinforces the boundary separating public and private life, assigning care to the private sphere and 'containing' the potential power of the ethic of care by rendering it "beyond (or beneath) political concern" (ibid.).

The 'second wave' of theorising the ethic of care rescues it from this 'containment' in the private sphere. Before looking at how an ethic of care can transform our values and how care continues to be devalued, the definition of care in these accounts needs to be examined. Williams offers what she calls a "social policy definition" of care,

> "In the first instance I am talking about those processes of social reproduction which involve meeting the needs for care and/or support of children, some groups of older people, and some groups of disabled people, people with learning disability and mental health problems. This can be in a paid, unpaid, formal or informal capacity. So this is a social policy definition. I do not assume that these groups require care all of the time, nor that they do not themselves take care of others" (2003: 2)

This is a narrow definition of care, focussing on the 'extra' care needs of particular groups. Williams then broadens this by outlining an 'ethic of care', which includes care of the self, and implicates everyone (2003: 14). Tronto gives the following definition of caring,

> "On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a *species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible.* That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (1993: 103, emphasis in original).

This is a very broad definition of caring, which is not only able to recognise caring activities in the private sphere but also more widely, in the social and political institutions of society (Sevenhuijsen 1998: 137). This breadth of understanding of care, as central to life, is the strength of an ethic of care as it allows claims to be made for the valuing of care and against its marginalisation, this will be explained below. Sevenhuijsen's definition of care explicitly encompasses its moral dimension, "...I view care... as a social practice, in which different sorts of moral considerations and moral vocabularies can be expressed" (1998: 19). For Sevenhuijsen, care has this moral dimension as it deals with

questions of how to handle dependency, responsibility, vulnerability and trust (1998: 3). She goes onto argue that these ethical issues in everyday experiences are difficult to acknowledge because in public debate the dominant framing of ethical questions are, "...in terms of rights and duties, obedience and authority, and in the question of who has the competency to decide what is right and wrong, or good and bad" (ibid.).

Tronto's starting point for developing her care ethic is to ask "What would it mean in late twentieth century American society to take seriously, as part of our definition of a good society, the values of caring...?" (1993: 2-3). A crucial part of her analysis is to transgress the boundary between morality and politics, to "consider how placing value upon the human activities of care will transform our values. Such a revaluing, though, is a political as well as a moral process" (1993: 97). This brings the ethic of care into the public sphere. Tronto identifies four phases in the process of caring, which are analytically separate, but in practice may overlap and interconnect. These are caring about, which involves seeing the need for care, taking care, which means taking the responsibility for care, care giving – doing the care work involved and care-receiving, responding to the cared-for person (1993: 105-7). Tronto relates these four phases to four associated ethical elements of care: attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness (1993: 126). Tronto and Sevenhuijsen are particularly interested in the moral basis of the ethic of care and they write from a political philosophy perspective.

Williams approaches the ethic of care from a policy studies perspective; of these three writers, she most strongly positions the ethic of care as a way to temper the emphasis on the paid work ethic in the UK context (2000: 3, 2002). In New Labour policy and discourse paid work has been constructed as central to citizenship, as the basis for a model of good parenting and as a means of resolving social exclusion (Williams 2001: 8). Williams argues that the dominance of the paid work ethic needs to be balanced by a care ethic to "recognise care of the self and others as meaningful activities in their own right" (ibid.). The need for the ethic of care to have practical and political implications is also important to

Sevenhuijsen and Tronto. Sevenhuijsen argues that the values of care need to be integrated into the notion of citizenship for the benefit of both, to enrich our notion of citizenship and to de-romanticise care (1998: 111). Tronto's overall hope for her work is to "...provide a glimpse into a different world, one where the daily caring of people for each other is a valued premise of human existence" (1993: x). She also asserts that "...care as a practice can inform the practices of democratic citizenship" (Tronto 1993: 164-7).

For Williams, Sevenhuijsen and Tronto the political acknowledgement of care is a priority and their analyses emphasise care as integral to human existence (Sevenhuijsen 1998: 147). This is clear when we move from the social policy definition of care (see above) to a broader one, which includes care of the self and is not confined to the 'extra' needs of some particular groups. Care then becomes recognised as an activity which consumes a large part of our daily lives (Tronto 1993: 111) and as an activity that "binds us all" (Williams 2003: 14). We have seen that for Tronto the ethical elements of care are the values of attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness it gives to the care-giver and care-receiver. For Williams, care-giving and receiving teaches the "civic virtues" of responsibility, trust, responsiveness and recognition of diversity as readily as doing paid work (2000: 5, 1999: 678). This means the ethic of care can challenge the construction of citizenship based on participation in paid work, which dominates New Labour policy, by arguing that care-giving and receiving is an integral and fundamental part of the human condition.

Care and interdependency

So far, this discussion has defined care, explored its ethical and moral dimensions and linked this with the way care could inform a new conception of the basis of citizenship. In this section I discuss some of the reasons put forward for the low value placed on care and caring activities. One argument given here is that the invisibility of care is rooted in the political ideal of the independent and autonomous citizen, free from dependencies and loyalties (Sevenhuijsen 1998: 5, Tronto 1993: 135, 165). The ethic of care challenges this by demanding that interdependence is seen as the basis of human interaction, so that autonomy and independence lead to self-determination, rather than self-sufficiency (Williams

2003: 13). This means that the ethic of care can't just be added on to the paid work ethic, but demands a fundamental change in dominant political ideas about human nature to recognise that we are all in the condition of *inter*dependence (Tronto 1993: 162). In the British political context, these ideals of paid work as the main responsibility of citizenship and the celebration of 'independence' can clearly be seen in lone parent policy, this is discussed further in chapter three.

This "denial of dependency" (Sevenhuijsen 1998: 19) highlights the dichotomy of the integrated paid worker/dependent others, seen in current policy. This is undermined by the care ethic perspective, which highlights the hidden support systems that maintain the 'independence' of the paid worker (Williams 1999: 676). This theme is also apparent in Tronto's analysis. In the context of the USA, she argues that the social position of care "serves to maintain the position of the relatively powerful and privileged" (Tronto 1993: 111). This occurs through ideas about individualism, autonomy and the "self-made man" (ibid.), so that the social power of a particular group can be perceived from whether or not other people do their own caring work (Tronto 2002). Elsewhere, it has been argued that care is marginalised in dominant understandings of citizenship because politicians and policy-makers have little of experience of care and because female politicians don't want to be connected solely with 'women's issues' (McKie et al 2001: 248-9, McKie et al 2002: 900-1).

The valorising of independence over interdependence and dependency is not the only explanation for the devaluing of care. Tronto claims that the "subordinate status" of care is not inherent in the nature of caring but, "is a function of the structure of social values and moral boundaries that inform our current ways of life" (1993: 63-4). The 'moral boundary' which 'contains' care in the private sphere has already been discussed. Another moral boundary preventing care from realising its potential to inform political and social practices is the separation of morality and politics, so care becomes seen as a "private and parochial concern". Lastly, the dominance of understanding care in the abstract, is an impediment to an understanding of care based in interactions between people, which are then afforded less value as moral concerns than abstract formulations (Tronto 1993:

178).

The ethic of care poses a challenge to dominant conceptualisations of 'independence' and rehabilitates the notions of dependency and interdependence. According to Williams, Sevenhuijsen's and Tronto's work has also done much "to universalise the importance of care for social and work life rather than seeing care as simply that which women mainly do in the home" (2003: 13). In this section I have explained the insights into care given by the ethic of care and outlined its political implications. In the following sections I evaluate the ethic of care in terms of the perspective it gives on caring activities in society and suggest there are a number of areas where the ethic of care can be strengthened or more fully developed. In doing this I will be able to indicate the oversights in these debates and show how my research develops the ethic of care.

Exploring the ethic of care

The discussion above suggested that an important aspect of second wave feminist was the naming of caring activities as 'unpaid work'. I then referred to the work of Himmelweit, who argued that the more personal forms of caring activities become marginalised as a consequence of the categorisation of these activities as unpaid work. Himmelweit's concluding thoughts, which are aimed at the future direction of a feminist economics, are that an analysis is needed which doesn't polarise all activities into the categories of work and non-work, but transcends this dichotomy to "...recognise the contribution of caring and self-fulfilling activities to the well-being of society..." (1995: 15, 16). Himmelweit's critique of the categorisation of caring activities as 'unpaid work' in second wave feminism, should not be taken to imply caring was only understood as labour here. For example, Hilary Graham argued that caring involves activity and identity, and requires both labour and love (1983: 13). This emphasis on the experiential dimension of care is similar to Tronto's contention that "care is best thought of as a practice" (1993: 108). The ethic of care, as articulated by Sevenhuijsen, Tronto and Williams, does have benefits over the earlier analyses and meets Himmelweit's demands that an analysis of caring activities should transcend the dichotomy of work/non-work. The ethic of care defines care broadly and recognises the centrality of care to life and the maintenance of society. The ethic

of care provides a framework that can be used to explore how social systems and policies arrange the provision of care (Sevenhuijsen 2000: 13) and translates the day to day practices of care into "practical, political and policy concerns" (Williams 2003: 12).

The ethic of care and the Total Social Organisation of Labour

The ethic of care is an important framework as it doesn't fit caring activities into a "pre-existing category of 'work'" (Himmelweit 1995: 2), but calls for care to be valued on its own terms. In this way the ethic of care side-steps the debates around whether or not caring activities and housework should be seen as 'work'. Glucksmann (1995) argues that the debate over the status of household labour, as work or different to work, is partly a self-created problem, related to the processes of structural differentiation within the academy. Work was subsumed within the discipline of economics and defined as activities which involve a monetary exchange, so only market 'work' was considered to be work (Glucksmann 1995: 66-7). Glucksmann attempts to move away from the definitional issues around 'work' and proposes the concept of the Total Social Organisation of Labour (TSOL) to capture "the manner by which all the labour in a particular society is divided up between and allocated to different structures, institutions and activities" (1995: 67). Work then becomes loosely defined as the activities,

> "necessary for the production and reproduction of economic relations and structures in a particular TSOL... and may be paid, unpaid, create use or exchange values. And it may be undertaken on a slave plantation, a commune, or in the 'public economy' of the market, or the 'private' economy of household" (Glucksmann 1995: 69).

The TSOL is not a theory and so is limited in its explanatory power (West 2001: 199). It draws attention to the way in which different forms of labour are assigned to different spheres, such as the market, the home, education or health care (Glucksmann 1995: 67); the differential distribution of male and female labour across these spheres; changes in this distribution and the way tasks move between spheres. We can use this concept to describe the shift from policy which treats lone mothers as mothers, to lone mothers as workers. The increasing professionalisation of childcare and emphasis on play/education/nurseries outside the home for under fours for a 'Sure Start' could be viewed as moving the labour

associated with childcare out of the private sphere into the public economy (for some groups). The increasing focus on paid work for lone mothers, is a 'new deal' in terms of increasing their total share of the TSOL, adding the labour in the public sphere onto their role in the private sphere. Lone mothers are a social group currently at the centre of an attempt to reconfigure the TSOL. Although the TSOL provides a way of describing the movement of caring activities between different spheres in society, in the context of this project the ethic of care is the main framework used. The ethic of care provides an explanation for why caring activities are not sufficiently valued, a framework for the analysis of policies dealing with care and a strategy for valuing care more highly by integrating it into notions of citizenship.

Decision-making

Although the ethic of care has these advantages, there has been a lack of application of the ethic of care to empirical research. The ethic of care needs to be more firmly grounded in empirical research to fully elucidate the range of caring practices undertaken and the everyday realities of care. As explained above, Tronto is concerned that the 'moral point of view' approach, seeing care in the abstract, dominates conceptions of morality and overlooks care in interactions between people. She also asserts that "care is best thought of as a practice" (1993: 108). In this section, I show that the accounts of the ethic of care, while concerned with care as a social practice, need to be more informed by empirical research. For Sevenhuijsen, the central question in the ethics of care is how to deal with dependency and responsibility (1998: 107). For Tronto, the central moral question is how to best meet caring responsibilities (1993: 137). These central questions both place emphasis on the decision-making processes that caring requires.

This emphasis on decision-making is repeated when empirical research is used to show the ethic of care in practice. Williams uses qualitative research with families to show that there is a "palpable moral texture to people's lives" (2001: 4, Irwin and Williams 2002: 7), which emerges from the "themes of negotiation, identity, context, fairness and respect" which characterises decision-making

(Williams 2001: 8). This attention to decision-making follows in the vein of work by Finch (1989) and Finch and Mason (1993), which shows that decisions around care are made in terms of how best to deal with these particular responsibilities, in a similar way to the questions Sevenhuijsen and Tronto pose, rather than in terms of normative guidelines of the 'right' or 'wrong' way to act in a given situation. As Williams comments, it reveals people to be "...reflexive moral agents led by relational more than individual concerns" (2001: 8). This research, including qualitative studies by Smart and Neale (1999) and Ribbens-McCarthy et al (2003), highlights a tension in the ethic of care debates. As an *ethic* of care, this perspective lends itself to looking at decision-making, but this emphasis on how decisions are made means less attention has been paid to fully developing an understanding of the breadth of caring practices that some people are engaged in, although interdependence and the centrality of care are acknowledged. To overcome this, research is needed which analyses the practices and meanings of care (Innes and Scott 2003) and takes account of the "spatial-temporal" elements of care (McKie et al 2002: 897). The empirical research discussed in chapters five to ten, goes some way towards this and demonstrates the range of caring practices which bind together families, friendships, communities and wider social networks. The ethic of care can then be grounded in empirical research, in care as a social practice and shows the ideal of 'independence' to be a political fiction. If New Labour want to valorise 'good' parenting, strong families and communities, then these 'hidden' processes of care need greater acknowledgment and to be more valued in terms of social status and financial rewards.

A place to care and the experiences of care-giving

The ethic of care has been used in the analysis of policy (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 2003, and Sevenhuijsen et al 2003). The lack of attention to the experiences of caring comes in part from a strength of the ethic of care, the way care is universalised, to recognise that care is not limited to activities carried out in the home (Williams 2003: 13). As I show in this study, paying attention to the *experiences* of caring can productively inform the ethic of care. In this study the importance of an adequate home for lone mothers, a satisfactory 'place to care' emerges (see chapter nine). This adds a new dimension, a place to care, to the

demands in the ethic of care material for 'time to care' and for an emphasis on the quality of relationships (Williams 2000: 2). The issues of the financial rewards for care, seen here in terms of having a decent place to care and the role of empirical research on caring will now be outlined in more depth.

In the 1970s the 'domestic labour debate', outlined above, became increasingly difficult to follow, particularly for women who wanted to change their lives (Malos 1995: vi). Predating these debates, and while they were being played out, empirical studies on the nature and conditions of housework and the experience of the housewife role were being undertaken. Particularly important here were Gavron's *The Captive Wife* (1966) and Oakley's *Housewife* (1976). These studies documented the everyday experiences of mothers. Gavron found that women were "not fully prepared for the responsibilities motherhood imposed on them, and many were acutely aware of the restrictions it imposed on their lives" (1966: 79). Oakley's research identified the negative aspects of housework; women said that is was never-ending, repetitious, monotonous and fragmented (1981: 173, 174). In my research, the importance of a 'place to care' is revealed and the breadth of caring that some women are engaged in is seen. Inadequate attention to the making of home in social research with lone mothers, puts researchers in danger of making similar mistakes to those summed up in Tronto's idea of 'privileged irresponsibility', the way more powerful groups in society can neglect the caring activities that sustain them (1993: 121).

This neglect of the experiences of care-giving, like the debates over the definition of 'work', may be partly due to differentiation in the academy. In early work on care, Graham noted that the "two interlocking transactions" of care, service and affection, had been "carefully dismantled by social scientists, and reconstructed within the separate disciplinary domains of psychology and social policy" (1983: 28). This resulted in psychological studies on the emotional meanings of care, without attention to the material foundations of care. Work in social policy from a marxist-feminst perspective analysed the material basis, the exploitation of women's labour and the advantages of this for the state, but "underplay[ed] the symbolic bonds that hold the caring relationship together" (1983: 28-9).

Sevenhuijsen also identifies two 'tracks' in research theorising care; the first dealing with care as an activity and carried out by sociologists, political scientists and historians (1998: 69). The second is the ethic of care, located "at the intersection of psychology, ethics, political theory and feminist jurisprudence" (Sevenhuijsen 1998: 70). Sevenhuijsen asserts that it would be beneficial for these two tracks to reinforce each other, she argues, "[t]he ethic of care is... related to the activity of caring as a whole; theorising about care will benefit from a broad conceptualisation of what care is and where it takes place" (1998: 83). The research that follows here (chapters five to ten) attempts to link up these two tracks, by providing a 'broad conceptualisation' of the caring activities that lone mothers are engaged in, looking at the implications of these and developing the ethic of care perspective to take account of these factors.

Other research into domestic labour and caring activities, not strictly informed by the ethic of care framework, also tends not to look at the meanings and experiences of everyday caring for mothers. Much of the recent work on domestic labour is centred on the division of labour within households in couple relationships and the connections between the division of household labour and level of participation in the formal labour market (see Barnett and Rivers 1998, Deutsch 1999, Layte 1999, Pilcher 2000). A newer theme examines 'chains of care' (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003); the emergence of new relationships between women as those with greater financial means off-load domestic labour and childcare to other women, creating relationships marked by class and ethnic differences (Leonard 2001: 71). While these are significant research areas, there remains a lack of research on the experiences of lone mothers engaged in caring.

Inequality and rewarding care

As has been noted, Himmelweit argues that bought 'substitutes' are increasingly replacing the less personal aspects of domestic activities (1995: 9). This may not be the case for everyone involved in caring activities and for some households in poverty the physical aspects of domestic labour may well remain (Gardiner 2000: 98). Innes and Scott studied mothers moving into paid work or further education and found that "[w]omen in low-income families may have more care responsibilities than do other families and they have fewer material and social

resources with which to carry them out" (2003: 11.4). Their research took place in an area marked by long-term deprivation and as "ill health and disability show class differentials", a number of women in their study were involved in the regular care of another adult as well as caring for their child(ren) (Innes and Scott 2003: 6.8, 9.6). Innes and Scott argue that the "circumstances and experiences" of women in low-income households with children must be understood to develop effective policy and to avoid "increasing problems of poverty and insecurity and further marginalizing care" (2003: 3.6). This was an aim of my research and can particularly be seen in chapters six and seven, where I show that the benefits of paid work expressed in the NDLP are far removed from the realities of lone mothers' lives.

The ethic of care demonstrates the importance of care, conceived broadly, and says that we are all implicated in processes of care, as care-givers or care-receivers (Williams 2000: 3). There are, of course, certain times of the life course when we are more intensively engaged in caring practices than others. For example, when caring for young children, the infirm and the elderly. The bulk of this intensive caring is carried out by women (Tronto 1993: 112). The low financial rewards for caring mean that many women are vulnerable to poverty in the long-term and especially in later life (Perrons 2000: 110, McKie et al 2002: 899, James and Benn 2004). Acknowledgement of the unequal division of caring activities and recommendations for a more satisfactory distribution of labour and caring between women and men is a priority in the ethic of care perspective (Sevenhuijsen 1998: 111). According to Tronto, care receives low financial rewards because of its low status in society, which leads to a "vicious circle": "care is devalued and the people who do the caring work are devalued" (1993: 114). The delivery of good care is reliant upon adequate resources (Tronto 1993: 110). Williams also notes that care needs to be adequately resourced,

> "[c]are requires time, financial and practical support and the recognition of choices. These extend beyond income and maintenance benefits and social services to access to public space, transport, anti-discriminatory and anti poverty policies" (2003: 15).

The ethic of care does recognise the importance of financial implications of caring and the need for greater material support of caring. Once again though, this is an

element of the ethic of care that would be strengthened by being further informed by empirical research with those caring on low-incomes. The work of Innes and Scott (2003) shows the additional burdens of caring in deprived areas and without detailed qualitative work, the everyday realities of caring practices cannot be seen. In the ethic of care literature, the issue of financial rewards for caring is not considered as fully as the social and political status of care. This may be due to the development of the ethic of care largely from a political theory position. Another factor here is the unresolved question of how radically society needs to change before care can be truly valued in the way Tronto and Sevenhuijsen imagine.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered the theorising of care and domestic labour in the domestic labour debate and the ethic of care literature. I noted that the domestic labour debate was significant as it made women's work in housework and care visible and stressed the necessity of social reproduction in the private sphere for production in the public sphere. However, the understanding of domestic labour as work meant the caring and feeling or emotional dimensions of these activities were underemphasized. In the 1980s and 1990s feminist literature on caring and housework reassessed the way care had previously been conceptualised, drawing attention to the way social class, race and sexuality shape experiences of care-giving and care-receiving to suggest that gender is not the sole significant factor here.

I then explored a recent perspective on care, the ethic of care as proposed in work by Sevenhuijsen, Tronto and Williams which emphasises the centrality of care to human experience. Here care is constructed as more than simply labour; the ethic of care is proposed as a counterweight to the social dominance of the paid work ethic and it is suggested that engagement in caring involves similar values to those which paid work is constructed as supplying, such as trust and responsibility. However, when seeking to understand the experiences of lone mothers, some weaknesses remain in recent analyses of caring. In particular, lone mothers

continue to be marginalised and the ethic of care literature needs a deeper foundation in empirical work that considers the practices and meanings of care-giving and receiving. In chapters five to ten I explore the range of caring practices that my interviewees were involved in, their attitudes towards care and housework and argue for the importance of creating a decent home as a place to care.

Before this, in chapter three I assess the policy framing of care and paid work in the lives of lone mothers in the New Deal for Lone Parents and Sure Start.

Chapter three

Lone mothers' lives and social policy: the New Deal and Sure Start

In chapter one I argued that lone mother research has been dominated by a social policy perspective and that the social worlds of mothers generally and of lone mothers in particular have been neglected. I explored the understandings of the relationship between the spheres of paid work and care (or unpaid work) in feminist scholarship: in the domestic labour debate and the ethic of care perspective. I argued that while both of these literatures provide valuable insights for the theorising of paid and unpaid work, lone mothers as a category are neglected and insufficient attention is given to the practices of care and the breadth of unpaid caring activities they are engaged in. In this chapter, I consider the policy framing of paid work and care in the lives of lone mothers by examining the New Deal for Lone Parents and Sure Start.

In the NDLP, New Labour's version of the 'good lone mother' is constructed and New Labour's gendered moral rationality of the appropriate relationship between paid work and care in the lives of lone mothers is articulated. New Labour's treatment of lone mothers marks a shift in policy and the construction of a new moral hierarchy of lone mothers, I begin this chapter by exploring the historical treatment of lone mothers, from the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act onwards to describe the emergence of the category 'lone mother', the previous moral hierarchy of lone mothers and to argue that New Labour's approach marks a break with previous official conceptualisations of the role of the 'good lone mother'. I then consider the construction of paid work and care in the Sure Start programme and argue that this policy contains two competing agendas, and that parental employment is increasingly emphasised.

Social policy, lone mothers and the shifting moral hierarchy

Women raising children outside of a heterosexual couple relationship have long

been viewed as problematic by the state (Lewis 1996). Prior to the emergence of the term 'lone mother' in the 1970s, these women were referred to in official literature by their route to lone motherhood, for example, as never-married women, deserted or abandoned wives, divorcees, or widows. These terms were linked to a moral hierarchy of lone mothers based on a particular sexual morality (Carabine 2001). Widows were seen as the most deserving and never-married women the least, a hierarchy which at times has been paralleled by the differential treatment by the state of these different 'types' of lone mothers. In New Labour policy a new moral hierarchy of lone mothers has been constructed, where those engaged in paid work are the 'good lone mothers' and receive higher financial rewards.[4] The sexual moral hierarchy persists, however, in social attitudes, though the stigma of lone motherhood has declined in strength (Silva 1996).

Lone mothers in policy from 1834-1950s

There is a small body of work that looks at the history of lone motherhood from a sociological or policy studies perspective (see Thane 1978, Kiernan et al 1998, Carabine 2001). Kiernan et al in *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth Century Britain* (1998: 2-3), identify the historical as the perspective that has been missing from the literature on lone motherhood and is an oversight their work seeks to address through a focus on the 1900s to the 1990s. Other literature takes the story further back and examines the treatment of lone mothers from the introduction of the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 (PLAA), a key moment in the construction of a particular 'problem' of lone motherhood (see Carabine 2001, Thane 1978). For the architects of the PLAA, "...the unemployed male 'able-bodied' worker" was the central problem of poverty (Thane 1978: 29). An assumption was made that the two-parent family and the dependency of women on men was the norm, but unmarried mothers, deserted wives and widows made up a significant category of applicants for poor relief (Thane 1978: 31-35). There was no national legislation on the treatment of lone mothers, so the assistance given by Poor Law boards varied from area to area. Local administrators of the Poor Law were "...uncertain above all as to whether the primary role of the unsupported working class mother was motherhood or work" (Thane 1978: 36). The PLAA recommended that the

[4] But see chapter six for a discussion of this point.

children of unmarried mothers should be supported by their mother or by her parents (Thane 1978: 32). In practice, destitute unmarried mothers claimed poor relief but were treated much more harshly than other 'unsupported mothers'; they were more likely to be sent to the workhouse and an 1851 ruling forbade their participation in domestic tasks there (ibid.). This treatment of unmarried mothers reveals the role social policy can play in constituting norms of sexuality (Carabine 2001: 295). The PLAA "reconstituted illegitimacy as a problem of female sexuality" and stigmatised unmarried mothers as less deserving than others (Carabine 2001: 298, 300). At this time the moral hierarchy of lone mothers was based on a particular version of sexual morality, where women, not men, were penalised for the outcome of sex outside of marriage.

The local variation in the administration of the Poor Law regarding 'unsupported' mothers was still present at the end of the nineteenth century (Thane 1978: 42). In 1909 the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws published their findings. The majority report supported the differential treatment of different 'types' of lone mothers and proposed that widows should be treated sympathetically, that deserted wives should not be eligible for outdoor relief for 12 months after the husband had left and that single women should be not be eligible for outdoor relief at all (Thane 1978: 44-5). The reports had little immediate impact on policy and in 1914 a circular reasserted concerns to distinguish these categories of lone mothers, urging that adequate support should be given to prevent widowed mothers of young children from entering paid work (Thane 1978: 46). For deserted mothers, the ever-present fear of fraudulent claims by women in league with their husbands was expressed and it was emphasised that "every effort was to be taken to find the husband and to make him support his family". The circular recommended that for unmarried mothers a distinction should be made between the 'innocent' and the 'depraved' (ibid.). So at this time, a few months after the outbreak of the First World War, a moral hierarchy of types of lone mothers in the pronouncements of government officials was clear. The hierarchy was still based on ideas of sexual morality and accountability; widows were considered the most deserving, they could not be held to any blame for the event that left them an 'unsupported' mother as they had remained within the boundaries of accepted

sexual morality by having children within the institution of marriage.

During the First World War (1914-18) there was a relaxation of sexual morality, especially amongst the middle classes and attitudes towards unmarried mothers shifted (Kiernan et al 1998: 74). Sympathy was expressed for 'war babies' and their unmarried mothers, who usually would have been wives by the time their child was born had it not been for war taking their potential husbands to the frontline (Kiernan et al 1998: 98). Unmarried motherhood became a serious issue and more legislative provisions were made for them (Lewis 1996: 2). The shifting attitudes to certain types of lone mothers was linked to the degree of accountability she had for her situation, but as war had disrupted the usual pattern of pre-marital conception followed by a 'shotgun wedding', unmarried mothers were temporarily spared some moral censure.

The next important moment in the treatment of lone mothers came after the Second World War, with the publication of the Beveridge Report (1942). The report proposed insurance provision in the event of divorce, desertion or separation (Wynn 1964: 28, 43). However, this was not implemented and welfare payments for unsupported mothers at this time were dependent on the discretion of the local National Assistance Boards (Wynn 1964: 42). Prevailing attitudes to the unmarried mothers, which had switched back to stigmatisation, shifted again. In the 1950s, the rise of social work with its emphasis on psychoanalytical literature prompted a reconstruction of the problem of unmarried motherhood, which now began to be understood as stemming from difficult family relationships and immature personality development (Lewis 1996: 1, Kiernan et al 1998: 108). Unmarried mothers were viewed as victims of circumstance, rather than moral deviants (Lewis 1996: 1).

The 1960s: fatherless families and mothers alone

In the 1960s a new understanding of the problem of lone mothers emerged. This period has been characterised as a time of the rediscovery of poverty (see Abel-Smith and Townsend 1965), and in particular of child poverty, which the post-second world war welfare settlement was supposed to have eliminated (Kiernan et al 1998: 112, 167). In place of perceptions of deviant morality or immaturity,

there was growing concern in official circles and in social research with the poor economic position and living conditions of lone mothers. Two important studies at this time were Wynn's (1964) *Fatherless Families*, and Marsden's *Mothers Alone: Poverty and the Fatherless Family* (1969, revised edition 1973). Wynn argued that fatherlessness was "one of the outstanding social problems of the day", and her work meticulously details the inadequate and anomalous welfare systems for fatherless families, exposing the inefficiency and inequity of the National Assistance Boards. Wynn was highly critical of the lack of National Insurance provision for fatherless families and argued that the deficiencies of the welfare system were responsible for the high rates of poverty experienced by unsupported mothers and their children (1964: 58). As a solution, Wynn proposed a *Fatherless Child Allowance* (1964: 16), which would treat lone mothers and their children equally, *regardless* of the route to fatherlessness. This consolidation of the category 'fatherless', is a central part of Wynn's work. Wynn notes that widowed mothers and unmarried mothers had recently been the focus of research studies in Britain, but in other countries "the problem of the fatherless has been seen more as a whole" (1964: 13). Wynn's study meant that 'lone mothers', here in the form of 'fatherless families', were beginning to emerge as a single category (Kiernan et al 1998: 167) and the principle of equal treatment regardless of route to fatherlessness, was being established. It appeared that the moral hierarchy of types of lone mothers was being displaced.

This impetus to consolidate the different types of unsupported mothers into one category was also a feature of Marsden's study, *Mothers Alone* (1969, 1973). Wynn's ground breaking work established the number of lone parent families in Britain and described their legal position and treatment by the welfare state. Supporting evidence for her analysis was in the form of correspondence with mothers or correspondence or conversations with relevant workers, as well as from collating official statistics. Marsden's work is founded on quite different data; *Mothers Alone* draws on 116 interviews with mothers from two areas of Britain and gives an in-depth and sensitive account of the "...lives and living standards of mothers alone" (Marsden 1973: 1). Marsden uses the term 'fatherless families' or 'mothers alone' as an acknowledgement of the common

needs of members of this family form. Marsden emphasised the poverty experienced by many of his interviewees, for example, one quarter to one third reported missing a meal everyday, 69% had not had an evening out in the previous fortnight, a "seasonal cycle of relative deprivation" was identified and women without capital could not create a decent home except at, "the expense of an adequate diet and clothing" (1973: 39-65). Marsden's policy recommendations are very similar to Wynn's. He argues that policy on lone motherhood has been constrained by its concern with different 'types' of lone mothers,

> "in terms of policy the fatherless family has no 'social identity'; or rather there have been a large number of separate policies relating to, and expressing, different and fragmented social identities" (1973: 315).

This fragmentation limited policy and meant the needs of these families which "stem[med] from their common economic position", had not been recognised (1973: 316). Marsden proposed "common provision" for these mothers and children, combining the different types of lone mothers into one category. He argued that such a system would need to be non-discretionary to ensure that mothers are "best protected from stigmatisation" (1973: 328).

Thus in terms of social research, by the beginning of the 1970s a convincing case had been put forward in favour of the consolidation of the different 'types' of lone mothers, into a single overall category of 'fatherless families' or 'mothers alone' for the administration of benefits. This would mean a shift away from a hierarchy of lone mothers based on sexual morality. Tentative moves to a collective treatment of lone mothers were made; in two official sources in 1967, the term 'fatherless family' was used and "statistics combining unsupported mothers of different marital status [were published]" (Marsden 1973: 319). However, there were "signs of official ambivalence about taking any further action" (ibid).

Lone mothers from the 1970s to the 1990s: a new moral hierarchy

The Finer Report

By the 1970s the social work based concerns with the personality deficiency of unmarried mothers were being replaced by a concern with the material needs of all 'unsupported' mothers and moves were being made to end the distinction between unmarried mothers and other types of lone mothers (Kiernan et al 1998: 116). The social stigma attached to unmarried motherhood declined throughout the 1960s as there was an increase in sexual activity among teenagers leading to more pregnancies, although in 1969 only 32% of extra-marital conceptions became 'illegitimate' births (Lewis 1996: 2). The changing perceptions of unmarried motherhood among policy makers, philosophers and church leaders were related to shifts in ideas about appropriate sexual morality,

> "[there was a shift from] seeing sexual morality as imposed from without to saying that all we have is an essentially private arrangement between two people, with morality coming from within and being manifested in the quality of the relationship" (Lewis 1996: 2).

This line of thinking left little room for an external code of morality or state intervention on the basis of a hierarchy of sexual morals. This attitude was reflected in the findings of the Finer Report (Department of Health and Social Security (1974), after the government finally relented to pressure for the needs of unsupported mothers to be subjected to official scrutiny.[5] The *Finer Committee* was established by the Labour government in 1969 and charged with studying one parent families, their needs and ways of ensuring equity between one parent and two parent families. The central recommendation of the Finer Report was for a *guaranteed maintenance allowance* and, reflecting the shifts in sexual morality, it emphasised that "a liberal democratic state could not expect to control sexual behaviour and so it must expect to pick up the pieces" i.e. that the financial costs of lone parenthood should be met by the welfare state (Lewis 1996: 4).

The actions of lone mothers at this time reflected and were part of the changing moral code. During the 1960s and 1970s unmarried and separated mothers began

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[5] For example, from a Local Authority Group in 1959 (Kiernan et al 1998)

to leave their parental or marriage home to live autonomously, meaning lone mothers became more visible (Kiernan et al 1998: 153). Unmarried mothers began to resist acting as a stigmatised group (Lewis 1996: 2) and in increasing numbers were refusing to enter mother and baby homes to give birth. Of course, changes in moral values were not universal; in some mother and baby homes prayers were said daily in the hope of reinstating the moral virtue of unmarried mothers (Kiernan et al 1998: 109). The number of mother and baby homes declined from the early 1970s onwards and can be interpreted as a departure from the (im)morality-based definitions of unmarried motherhood and a move away from the sexual moral hierarchy of lone mothers. However, despite these changes, the recommendations of Marsden, Wynn and Finer were not realised. The Finer Report was a laudable first attempt at a detailed consideration of the policy implications of the changes in family structure, but was very limited in terms of its impact on policy. In the twenty years after its publication, policy on lone mothers remained relatively static (Millar 1996: 97).

Changes in policies and the demographics of lone motherhood

Although policy on lone motherhood was relatively static from the early 1970s to the early 1990s, significant changes occurred in the number and characteristics of the population of lone mothers, which formed the context for a new basis for the moral hierarchy of lone mothers in the 1990s and early twenty-first century. In 1969 there were 55,600 divorces in Great Britain (National Statistics 2004*c*). In 1971 the Divorce Reform Act, passed in 1969, came into effect. This was a liberalising change and meant proof was no longer required of a marital offence committed by one party against the other. The divorce rate increased rapidly and in 1972 there were 124,600 divorces (ibid.). Between 1970 and 1975 the number of divorced lone mothers claiming supplementary benefits doubled (Kiernan et al 1998: 182), but at this time a higher proportion of lone mothers than married mothers were in employment. By 1991, this trend had reversed and proportionally more married mothers than lone mothers were employed (Lewis 1997: 58). In 1970 changes in housing policy gave lone mothers greater access to local authority housing meaning more lone mothers could live autonomously with their child(ren) rather than remaining in or returning to their parental home (Kiernan et al 1998: 154). In the 1980s and 1990s further changes meant that

local authorities could not give priority to lone parents to be near friends or family, so some lone mothers were dislocated from access to informal childcare and from their employment (Land 1999: 134). State funded childcare was in short supply and historically there had been a division between nursery *education* and day *care* provision, the latter reserved for 'at risk' children (Kiernan et al 1998: 24). In the late 1970s the government appealed to local authorities for greater childcare provision but these calls went unheeded as extra resources were not provided and this coincided with the OPEC oil crisis in 1976 (Kiernan et al 1998: 259).

By the end of the 1970s lone parent families accounted for 10% of all families with dependant children, while by 1990 this had risen to 18% (Kiernan et al 1998: 195). Moreover, by the end of the 1980s, the majority of lone mothers were claiming income support. This increased reliance on income support was related to increases in the number of lone parent families during the 1980s. In the first half of this decade this was attributable to a rise in the divorce rate; in the second half it was due to the increasing number of unmarried lone mothers. This group were younger than other lone mothers, had lower levels of qualifications and younger children so were less likely to be in paid employment (Land 1999: 131). At the end of the 1980s the rapid rise in the financial costs of lone motherhood to the welfare state was a cause for concern for the government (Kiernan et al 1998: 269).

Political and policy responses to the growth of lone motherhood

Politically, this period was dominated by New Right ideas, expressed by the Thatcher governments of 1979-1990. In the early 1980s the low political profile that lone parents had in the 1970s continued (Kiernan et al 1998: 179), but as benefit costs rose and the idea of an underclass who were exploiting welfare resources grew in influence, this began to change. The underclass thesis, which can be traced back to the United States and particularly to the writings of Charles Murray (1990, 1994), gained currency in the media and political arenas. The underclass are characterised by having children outside of marriage, criminality and unemployment. Murray argued that unmarried younger women were making a rational choice to have children and be dependent on the state because the social

stigma of 'illegitimacy' had declined and welfare payments were readily available. For the proponents of the underclass thesis, illegitimacy has harmful social consequences as the sons of these lone mothers and their absent fathers turn to crime (Murray 1990). These ideas found favour among the New Right in Britain in the early 1990s, in a climate of moral panic around juvenile crime and coincided with the retrenchment and restructuring of the welfare state "within a wider project of 'patriarchal reconstruction'" (Roseneil and Mann 1996: 191, 209). The dominant discourse of lone motherhood shifted from concern with the problems faced by lone mothers due to structural poverty to a concern to re-stigmatise lone motherhood and its harmful consequences which were constructed as a social problem, or even a social threat (Kiernan et al 1998: 118, see also Duncan and Edwards 1999: 25-6). In political terms, the moral, financial and social costs of the rising rates of lone motherhood were bound together. In 1991, under the Conservative government, the Child Support Act was passed. This emphasised the obligations of biological fathers to pay maintenance for their children in an attempt to dissuade fathers from leaving families and to reduce the costs of the welfare state.

In 1993 the Child Support Agency (CSA) was established to implement the Child Support Act (Lewis 1997: 65); in this year the "level of vitriol against lone mothers, particularly never-married mothers, reached a new intensity" (Roseneil and Mann 1996: 193) and from the right of the political spectrum the drive to re-stigmatise certain lone mothers intensified. Lone mothers were a central theme of the Conservative Party conference in this year and high profile ministers questioned the entitlement of 'single' mothers to social housing and welfare benefits; and a Green Paper was published which contained plans to cut back the entitlement of lone mothers to social housing (Phoenix 1996: 177-8). However, the failings of the CSA and the increasing normality of the experience of lone motherhood provided countervailing forces to this re-moralisation (Silva 1996: 7, Phoenix 1996: 178). Separated fathers and their second families campaigned against the CSA, helping to normalise lone motherhood and bring "public consciousness into line with contemporary social realities" (McIntosh 1996: 149). Against this, the old hierarchy of lone mothers was being strongly reasserted in media and official circles, with unmarried mothers being re-stigmatised as

undeserving lone mothers who had fallen pregnant as a deliberate strategy to access social housing and to claim benefits from an over-generous welfare state. Increasingly, never-married lone mothers were being highlighted as posing particular social problems so the category of 'lone mother' was fragmenting again.

A new basis for the moral hierarchy of lone mothers

During the 1990s the number of lone mothers continued to grow, while the proportion in paid work continued to fall and the proportion of employed married mothers rose (Lewis 1997: 66). The CSA had not been the success its architects had planned as it was becoming clear that biological fathers were often unwilling or unable to pay increasing maintenance payments (Kiernan et al 1998: 209). The failure of the CSA led to a shift in the focus of social policy on lone motherhood, "away from trying to change the behaviour of fathers to changing that of lone mothers" (ibid.). At this time the basis of the moral hierarchy of lone mothers was being redefined. During the twentieth century the caring of their children by lone mothers had not been highly valued in terms of benefit levels but it was generally considered legitimate for lone mothers not to be in paid work and until the 1990s in official circles there was little discussion of compelling lone parents into employment (Rowlingson and McKay 2002: 124). In the 1990s this began to change and attempts were made to encourage lone mothers to enter paid employment, to assume the role of the absent male breadwinner. The first incarnation of this policy was the Conservative's 'Parent Plus' scheme, which offered employment advice to lone mothers in 12 areas (Jones 1997). The defeat of the Conservative Party in the 1997 general election meant this scheme did not progress beyond the piloting stage. However, this policy approach was consolidated and accelerated under the incoming New Labour government who quickly launched the New Deal for Lone Parents, first as a pilot in selected areas and then as a nationwide scheme. The NDLP is part of New Labour's policy strategy to achieve their aim of a 70% employment rate among lone parents by 2010. In their pre-election campaigning, speeches, policy documents and press releases the benefits of paid work for lone mothers, including the morality of the paid work ethic, an increase in income and broadened social networks were proclaimed (explored in more depth below).

This new emphasis on participation in paid work heralded a recasting of the moral hierarchy of lone mothers from a concern to distinguish different types of lone mothers according to a particular sexual morality, to one based on participation in paid work. New Labour have constructed the image of the 'good lone mother' as synonymous with the employed lone mother (Head 2002), so that "'[g]ood' single mothers are being reconstituted as responsible parents who go out to work and are financially independent" (Carabine 2001: 307). For New Labour, the *participation* in paid work is more important than financial independence, as most lone mothers moving from income support to paid work will be in receipt of tax credits. New Labour's mantra of 'making work pay', means that in policy at least, the supposedly more worthy moral choice of participation in paid work attracts higher financial rewards. While this new moral hierarchy is most prominent in social policy, traces of the old moral hierarchy are visible. For example, younger mothers, who are often unmarried, though not necessarily without a partner, are still a particular concern of the Labour government, in terms of their parenting skills and need for state resources (see Social Exclusion Unit 1999 and Kidger 2002).

New Labour's construction of the good lone mother: the New Deal for Lone Parents

In the previous section I discussed the treatment of lone mothers in social policy from 1834 until the launch of the NDLP in 1997 and argued that the prescribed role of lone mothers in policy, while dependent on the route to the lone motherhood, has broadly changed from worker at the turn of the nineteenth century, to mother in the 1950s and is now shifting once again, back to an emphasis on employment (Kiernan et al 1998: 287). In this section and the next I consider the contemporary policy framing of paid work and care for lone mothers in more depth. I examine the history of the NDLP and the rationale for its introduction and analyse the benefits of paid work for lone mothers according to New Labour and the New Deal promotional literature. These themes are revisited in chapters five to ten, where I consider the perceptions of lone mothers of the

benefits and drawbacks of paid work, and in chapters five and six in particular, which are organised around the three main benefits of paid work according to the NDLP.

The development of the New Deal for Lone Parents

The New Deal was announced in the July 1997 Budget and was established with funds from the Windfall Tax from the privatised utilities. Originally the New Deal was to last the lifetime of that Parliament but was later made permanent. The New Deal was developed in a partnership between the D*f*EE and DSS. The New Deals are Labour's programmes to 'activate' particular groups of the unemployed and are a key part of their strategy to facilitate the employment of working age adults where possible (Millar 2000: 334). Various New Deal programmes have been established to target different categories of the unemployed and the economically inactive. There are six main programmes: the New Deal for Lone Parents, New Deal for Young People, New Deal for the Long Term Unemployed, New Deal for the Partners of Unemployed People, New Deal for Disabled People and the New Deal for People Aged 50 and Above (Millar 2000*a*). The services offered to the target group and the demands made of them vary from programme to programme and have been revised as the New Deals have been implemented and evaluated. This is certainly the case for the NDLP, which was the first welfare to work programme to be launched.

Harriet Harman, then Social Security Secretary, launched the NDLP pilots on 21st July 1997, less than three months after New Labour's election victory. The NDLP was introduced in three phases, from phase one, the introduction of the prototype programme in eight Benefit Agency districts; phase two, in April 1998 when the programme was extended to encompass lone parents throughout the country making a new or repeat claim; and phase three, from October 1998 when the NDLP was made available to all lone parents in receipt of income support (Millar 2000*a*: 336, Hasluck et al 2000*a*: 3). As well as these three phases, which have seen the target group and coverage of the NDLP increase, a number of other changes in the operation and delivery of the NDLP have been made, to widen the target group and introduce an element of compulsion with regard attendance at work-focussed interviews (see Millar 2000*a*). The creation of the job centre-

based Personal Adviser (PA) role has been a key element of the New Deal programmes; each New Deal participant is assigned a Personal Adviser (PA) to provide ongoing employment-related support. The NDLP is a voluntary programme but since April 2001 attendance at a work-focussed interview with a PA has been compulsory for certain groups of lone parents in receipt of income support. Initially this was for those who youngest child was aged between 13-15 years and subsequently for parents of younger children, who can then choose whether or not to join the NDLP (Newcastle City Council 2003). From April 2003 all lone parents making a new claim for income support have to attend a compulsory work-focussed interview, and this also applies to existing income support recipients whose youngest child is aged over five years and three months (Durham County Council 2004). From April 2004 work-focussed interviews have been compulsory for all lone parents claiming income support, and review meetings will be held annually for lone parents who remain on benefits or more frequently for parents of older children (DWP 2004*b*). However, entry to the NDLP remains voluntary after participation in a work-focussed interview.

New Labour's problem with lone mothers

Before the 1997 general election, it was clear that if New Labour were elected then a concerted effort would be made to decrease the number of lone parents in receipt of income support. The Labour Party's election manifesto (1997) made a commitment to job centre-based advice and information to lone parents, in receipt of income support whose youngest child had completed the first term of primary school. Lone parents on benefits were cast as a problem because they headed the majority of 'workless' households; in a press release Harman stated, "two out of three children in workless households are being brought up by lone mothers" (DSS*a* 1997). She continued to note that lone mothers in Britain are "among the least likely to work and among the most likely to depend on benefits [in Europe]" (ibid.).

In the run up to the general election in 1997 lone mothers in receipt of income support were a problem for New Labour primarily in terms of the financial drain on the welfare state (Levitas 1998: 141) and this theme continued after New

Labour's electoral victory. In a speech in June 1997 Harriet Harman commented, "[t]here are now one million lone mothers bringing up two million children dependent on benefits, at a cost of £10 billion a year and growing" (DSS 1997*b*). Frank Field, then charged with overseeing the reform of welfare provision (Levitas 1998: 142), continued with this theme by arguing that the current financial costs of welfare were too great for a system that was delivering unsatisfactory results. He envisaged that New Labour's reforms would be successful by "actively helping people back into work... by delivering a top-quality level of service - the system will become cheaper" (DSS 1997*c*). While concerns with the financial costs of lone mothers have remained important, over time fears for the moral and social consequences of their 'worklessness' have become more pronounced.

The benefits of paid work

New Labour have expressed concern regarding money and lone mothers in two respects, firstly, in terms of the financial burden on the welfare state, as described above. Secondly, concerns about the finances of lone mothers have been used in the promotion of paid work in the New Deal literature. In the following discussion, I consider this understanding of paid work as bringing financial benefits to lone mothers before moving on to discuss the two other key themes in this discourse of paid work as an integral part of the life of the 'good lone mother'. These are the personal moral improvement bestowed by paid work and its role in social inclusion. In this discussion of the benefits of paid work for lone mothers I draw on a selection of documents, focussing on those which have been part of the public presentation of the NDLP including press releases, government webpages, speeches and New Deal literature aimed at lone mothers, dating from 1997-2001.

New Labour, lone mothers and money

When the New Deal programme was announced Harman referred to a study which found that "lone parents are on average over £50 per week better off in work" (than on income support), she added that the New Deal provided lone

parents with a route to a "better standard of living" (DSS 1997*b*). The Green Paper, *New Ambitions for Our Country* (DSS 1998*a*) affirmed the principle of "making work pay", as a central part of the new welfare contract between government and individuals. The successor of the Conservative's Family Credit, Working Families Tax Credit, was designed to emphasise the financial benefits of paid work by linking "support more closely with the pay packet" to "demonstrate the rewards of work" (DSS 1998*a*: 2). Tax credits are available to lone mothers (and other groups) who are engaged in low paid work to boost wages so that participation in employment attracts higher financial rewards than income support supplies. In this way tax credits are supposed to provide a financial incentive for lone mothers to engage in paid work by ensuring that incomes rise, not fall, on entry to employment. They are a policy particularly favoured by Gordon Brown and rest on the assumption that an individual's behaviour can be shaped by financial incentives. The logic of this thinking, dependent on the construction of the 'rational economic woman', has been criticised for overlooking lone mothers' "gendered moral rationalities" of the 'proper' relationship between paid work and motherhood (see chapter one, Duncan and Edwards 1999 and Barlow and Duncan 2000).

Nevertheless, this theme continues to be used in the promotion of the NDLP. In November 2000 Alistair Darling, as Secretary of State for Social Security, told lone parents that WFTC means full time paid workers "are guaranteed an income of over £200 a week – a lot more than you'd get on benefit" (Darling 2000: 19). On the New Deal website, lone parents are advised:

> "Paid work can raise the family income and make it easier for you to plan ahead with your finances and build a more secure future for yourself and your children" (New Deal 2000)

In *Solo* (NDLP 1999), a government newsletter produced for lone parents, there is a discussion of the NDLP is structured around the question "Could you really be better off?". On the NDLP website (2000), a similar question is asked, "Will I be better off? " The answer is given in terms of money and refers to the range of in-work tax credits available, concluding, "[t]he aim of New Deal is that you and your family should be better off in work than on benefits."

While it is accurate to say that some lone mothers entering paid work will see an increase in their income, this is an artefactual consequence of the benefits system (Bradshaw et al 2000: 14), which is designed to 'make work pay' via a system of tax credits. However, for some women the financial increases that paid work provides may be relatively small, particularly when the extra costs of employment are included, for example transport, clothing, and childcare. Even in this theme of the promotion of paid work for financial increases, work is about more than an increased income – it is also constructed as a route to a more stable and secure future. Paid work is presented as a less risky strategy than being in receipt of income support. This is surprising and perhaps the reverse of what might be expected and raises the important question of where does risk for lone mothers lie? This idea of stability and security provided by paid work is bound up with wider political concerns for the *privatisation of risk*, mainly a concern that individuals outside of the labour market will not be building up a private pension and so will continue to be 'dependent' on the state into old age (Levitas 2001: 454); or as Harman remarked, "Today's unemployed lone mother becomes tomorrow's poorest pensioner" (DSS 1997*c*). Again, this poverty is a consequence of how caring activities are (poorly) rewarded by the welfare state.

Paid work and personal moral improvement

The second theme employed in the promotion of paid work to lone mothers is the idea that it provides what can be termed *personal moral improvement*. This is constructed by New Labour as a transition from a state of dependence, indignity and lack of self-respect to a new and better way of life. These effects of paid work on the individual are clear in the following extract from a speech by Harman,

> "...work is not just about earning a living. It is a way of life... Work helps fulfil our aspirations – it is the key to independence, self-respect and opportunities for advancement" (DSS 1997*d*).

In *Meet the Answer* (New Deal 1999*b*), a pamphlet to introduce lone mothers to the NDLP and PA system, an attempt is made to reassure wary lone mothers, "starting a job... is a *very positive step* to take and many lone parents have

managed to do so successfully" (my emphasis). Here the question "Why work?" is posed and a number of answers are given, one of these cites the "feeling of independence... in terms of finances and greater self-reliance, [this] is a great boost to self-esteem", that can be gained from paid work. In *Solo* (New Deal 1999*b*), paid work is presented as a chance to "get some independence into your life". The idea that paid work provides independence, is reliant on a particular understanding of 'dependency' and the different construction of tax credits from income support; it is only the latter that is understood as welfare dependency, even though many lone parents in paid work will be 'dependent' on tax credits to supplement low wages. The main concern for New Labour is the 'workless' household, so a lone mother in formal employment but in receipt of tax credits is constructed as being in a more desirable and 'independent' position than a lone mother outside of the labour market and 'dependent' on income support.

The moral improvement to be had from the unit of the 'workless' household moving into employment is not only beneficial to the lone mother, but is also constructed as a way to improve the future prospects of the children of the household. This view was articulated by Harriet Harman before the official launch of the NDLP,

> "Having a mother in paid work is good for children. It is a passport to a better standard of living and better prospects throughout their lives" (DSS 1997*d*).

For New Labour, paid work has positive consequences for children as it raises the household income whilst elevating the status of the lone mother from a non-worker to a worker, which is constructed as a move to a higher moral ground. It provides the children of lone mothers with an "an active valuable role model", which connects them to the paid work ethic (DSS 1998*a*: 58). Engagement in paid work is constructed as an obligation which lone parents should feel towards their children and forms part of the contract that New Labour has attempted to engender between government and individuals; Frank Field commented,

> "It is the duty of government to help parents meet the costs of raising their children. It is the duty of parents to support their children, and other family members, financially and emotionally" (DSS 1998*b*, my emphasis).

So far, this discussion of the personal moral improvement found in paid work has focussed on the first years of New Labour's time in office, however this theme has continued to be a prominent part of the promotion of the programme. Alistair Darling emphasised the importance of a working parent as a role model and the benefits this has for a child's future,

> "[I]f mum or dad is working [and living in the household] children grow up expecting to have a job. Give your kids the same chances as other people" (2000: 19).

The idea that workless households are failing to transmit the paid work ethic via an appropriate role model and so promote a set of alternative and undesirable values to their children slides New Labour rhetoric into the territory of the underclass thesis. Non-participation in paid work is constructed as morally undesirable and as a series of denials: of a role model, of the paid work ethic and of a good future for your children. It is the alternative, joining the NDLP and successfully making the transition into paid work that constitutes the 'good lone mother'. Moss (2000) argues that New Labour's early years policies are primarily concerned with what young children will become in the future. Here in the NDLP literature, it is for the future prospects of their children that lone mothers should enter the labour market.

Paid work and social inclusion

The third theme in the promotion of paid work incorporates its role in social inclusion. The campaign against social exclusion has been a central idea in New Labour's political project (see Levitas 1998). In 1997 the concept of social exclusion advanced further in government policies with the establishment of the interdepartmental Social Exclusion Unit (Percy-Smith 2000: 2). The dominant discourse of social exclusion here constructs participation in the labour market as the key route to inclusion (Levitas 1996, Holden 1999). This has been adopted as central to New Labour's social inclusion strategy and can be clearly seen in the promotion of paid work to lone mothers. Harman expressed this simply, "work provides access to social networks" (DSS 1997*d*). Three years later, Alistair Darling drew on similar notions to promote employment,

> "You have money in your hands, confidence and *the support network that comes from knowing more people*" (Darling 2000)

This automatic equating of paid work and social inclusion for lone mothers is not a safe assumption to make; indeed there is some evidence that suggests being employed may make it more difficult to maintain relationships with family and friends (Bradshaw et al 2000: 13). It should be clear by now that paid work is very important to New Labour. This can be seen in Field's recommendation of *New Ambitions for Our Country*,

> "[it breaks] the traditional welfare mould in three crucial respects. It moves from a focus on simply paying benefits – to enabling people to move into work. It moves from dispensing cash – to also providing services. It moves from merely alleviating poverty – to ensuring that each and every one of us have opportunities to develop our talents to the full" (DSS 1998*b*)

Each of these three statements emphasises the centrality of paid work to New Labour's remoulding of the welfare state. This is explicit in the first claim and implicit in the services and opportunities language of the second and third. All in all, paid work seems to have a monopoly on the imaginations of many New Labour politicians.

So, New Labour, in the promotion of the NDLP, have constructed the 'good lone mother' as one who is engaged in employment. Paid work is conceptualised as almost always positive for lone parents and their children and little consideration is given to any potential difficulties in combining the roles of lone mother and employee. Paid work is presented as giving lone mothers more money, more confidence, more independence, and more friends. It is presented as a responsibility lone mothers should meet and a moral obligation they should fulfil. The reality of the caring obligations that lone mothers have and the practical, logistical and, perhaps, moral problems they might encounter when entering paid work are neglected. This gap between the abstract value placed on paid work and the everyday lives of lone mothers with young children is the focus of the second part of thesis. I return to these three themes in the promotion of paid work in chapters six and seven to analyse the perceptions of lone mothers of the benefits and drawbacks of paid work. In the next section I discuss a second policy from New Labour that has been identified as crucial in their undertaking to overcome

social exclusion and which is also relevant to the policy framing of paid work and care in the lives of lone mothers, Sure Start.

Sure Start

The development of Sure Start

Sure Start programmes are locally run in areas identified as deprived and aim to improve early years services for young children and their families (Home Office 1998: 14). Sure Start was developed as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review on services for young children (1997-8). The Comprehensive Spending Review began in 1997 and was charged with reviewing the "pattern and level of public spending and to reform public spending to take account of the Government's priorities" (Glass 1999: 259).[6] The review of services for young children spanned a number of departments and reflected the views of ministers that services for young children appeared to be "failing those in greatest need" (ibid.). The review was overseen by Tessa Jowell, then Minister for Public Health, who was acting in her own right, not as a departmental minister, and was supported by Treasury officials (Glass 1999: 260). In the terms of reference for the review, published in October 1997, a concern with social exclusion was clear,

> "To look at the policies and resources devoted to children aged seven and under, in order to ensure effectiveness in providing preventative action and the necessary support to ensure the development of their full potential throughout their lives; *to consider whether the multiple causes of social exclusion affecting young children could be more effectively tackled at the family and community level using a more integrated approach to service provision*; to take account of policy developments and initiatives being taken forward in other fora" (Glass 1999: 260, my emphasis).

As the review progressed the emphasis moved from services for under seven year olds to the under fours. This had two merits, the first was political as the under fours were a "policy free zone" so any programmes here would not come into

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[6] Norman Glass chaired the review of children's service in the comprehensive spending review 1997-98 and chaired the official steering group which implemented the programme (see Glass 1999, 2003) so is particularly well placed to comment on Sure Start.

conflict with the school system (Glass 2003: 8). Secondly, research evidence suggested that resources placed here stood the greatest chance of making a difference to the lives of children in deprived areas (Glass 1999: 260). After a seminar series, which included the input of academics and those involved in early years services, a report of the review findings was published. This concluded that the early years of life were very important, existing services were patchy and that providing comprehensive, community-based services for young children could "break the cycle of social exclusion and lead to significant long term gain to the Exchequer" (Glass 1999: 261). As a result of this the Sure Start programme was proposed and accepted.

Sure Start is an example of joined-up government, as the Sure Start Unit is located in the D*f*EE and has its targets set by a Steering Group made up of ministers from a number of departments. Each local programme holds responsibility for meeting the nationally set targets and the Secretary of State for Education and Employment and the Minister for Public Health are responsible for the achievements of Sure Start at the national level. In January 1999 the first 60 Sure Start "trailblazer districts" were announced. Areas were chosen "using the 1988 Index of Local Deprivation (comprised of 12 measures of deprivation), boosted with two extra child-focussed indicators; low birth weight and teenage pregnancy" (Sure Start 2000*a*). This meant resources were allocated on the basis of need, not on the basis of competitive bidding (Hollis 2000). In the 2000 Spending Review, the number of Sure Start programmes was doubled to 500 (HM Treasury 2000) and Sure Start programmes now cover one third of children under four living in poverty (Glass 2003: 3). A huge commitment to Sure Start has been made by the government in terms of funding; the estimated budget of Sure Start is now over £500 million per year (ibid.)

Sure Start, parents and children: the importance of the early years

Sure Start funding is available to local programmes to "deliver support services, including family support, childcare, primary healthcare, early learning and play" (Home Office 1998: 14). Sure Start programmes run in deprived areas, which suffer a range of problems, including "poor educational achievement, health or

housing and unemployment" (Home Office 1998: 13). New Labour's early years policy is primarily driven by concerns for the future of children (Moss 2000: 84) and this is evident in the development and promotion of Sure Start. New Labour has emphasised that Sure Start is a policy based on evidence. At the 1999 Sure Start conference, Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer said Sure Start was based on "evidence and experience, not theory and dogma" (Brown 1999: 21). Evidence for the importance of "early intervention" in the lives of poor children comes from the American High Scope scheme; where integrated "family support and early education for disadvantaged black children" resulted in greater educational achievement, higher incomes in adulthood, less crime and less spending on social security (Jowell 1999: 28).

This concern with the future prospects of children living in deprived areas dominates the political rhetoric around Sure Start. In the foreword to the booklet for the third wave of programmes, Blunkett and Cooper lament the public costs of the,

> "increased rates of illness, higher truancy rates, higher levels of unemployment, higher levels of teenage pregnancy and greater involvement in criminal activity that is the future for so many of our poorest children" (2000: 2).

Sure Start's early intervention strategy aims to deliver high quality services to prevent poor children perpetuating the social problems their parents experienced. For Blunkett and Cooper this means that Sure Start will be able to break the "cycle of child poverty" (ibid.).

The Sure Start website describes the aim of the programmes as "To work with parents-to-be, parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children – particularly those who are disadvantaged..." (Sure Start n.d.). The logic behind Sure Start suggests that if the programmes can create an equality of early childhood experiences, or at least improve the experiences of the most disadvantaged, these children will be provided with an equal chance of succeeding in education and might avoid social problems in adulthood, overcoming a "vicious circle" to create a "virtuous cycle" (DSS 1999: 39). The outcomes of Sure Start programmes are supposed to meet

four objectives: improve the social and emotional development of children; improve health; improve the ability to learn; and strengthen families and communities (Sure Start 2000*a*). Each of these objectives is accompanied by a number of measurable targets for the programmes and the Sure Start programmes are subject to much evaluation (see NESS 2004). In the next section, I consider Sure Start's fourth objective, 'strengthening families and communities' in more depth, as it here that Sure Start's target around workless households is located.

Sure Start and the New Deal for Lone Parents

Lone parents (or lone mothers) are seldom referred to specifically in Sure Start literature, but, on the Sure Start website the NDLP was described as a "linked initiative" (Sure Start 2000*a*). Dean has noted, "recent social policy reforms contain mixed messages concerning the nature of familial responsibility" (2001: 279). Similarly, Levitas (1998) has argued that there is a contradiction at national level between policies that pursue inclusion through paid work and those which stress the importance of parenting, for example, between the NDLP and Sure Start. Lone mothers may feel the difficulties of fulfilling the roles of good parent and paid worker especially acutely. In 2000 a new target was added to Sure Start's objective four, "to reduce the number of 0-3 year old children in Sure Start areas living in households where no-one is working by 2004" (Sure Start 2000*a*). Previously the targets for this objective had been based around parent participation on the local programme boards and reports of improvements in early years services (ibid.). In this way, rather than there being a contradiction at the national level *between* policies, this addition to objective four creates a tension within Sure Start, between the responsibilities lone mothers have to their children *and* to the labour market.

Thus within Sure Start there are two competing agendas: a tension around whether the appropriate role of mothers of young children is full time caring or participation in paid work. Objectives one and two, which focus on the social and emotional development of young children and on promoting health, aim to achieve these goals by facilitating the bonding of parents and children and good

caring practices. The new target for objective four, means Sure Start programmes should also be working to facilitate the entry of lone mothers into employment. This could be problematic in terms of the burden and pressure it may place on lone mothers and because of the tension it creates in Sure Start programmes. There has been some acknowledgement of this at the national level. In 2000, at the annual Sure Start conference, Geoff Mulgan of the No. 10 Policy Unit noted that Sure Start's increased emphasis on parental employment may mean "managing what can be a culture clash between projects which are primarily concerned with very young children and the needs of a labour market and jobs" (Mulgan 2000: 32). At the Sure Start Spending Review seminar in 2000, delegates raised concerns about Sure Start being moved closer to the aims of the New Deal. These centred on the long and exhausting hours of the paid work that some parents engaged in, which meant they were "unable to give quality time to their children" (Sure Start 2000*b*: 6).

The emphasis on the employment of parents in Sure Start comes from the framing of the programme as part of the government's anti-poverty and social inclusion strategies. Sure Start is flagged up in the *UK National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2001-2003:* "Sure Start is a cornerstone of the Government's drive to tackle child poverty and social exclusion" (DSS 2001: 35). However, the Sure Start programmes in themselves only mean improvements in local services for young children and their parents, not an increase in income. If Sure Start is to have a role in ending child poverty then this will have to be in terms of getting parents into paid work, because, as Norman Glass notes, "otherwise it is difficult to see how else it can contribute to ending child poverty before 2020" (2003: 5).[7] The objectives of Sure Start at the national level provide mixed messages to lone mothers about their appropriate role and there does not appear to be internal consistency within the programme. This is a point that Glass picks up on,

> "policy whose aim is to reduce child poverty by raising family incomes through paid work may not necessarily be consistent with a desire to strengthen family ties and to satisfy the developmental needs of young children" (2001: 17).[8]

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[7] Glass goes on to acknowledge that poverty is not necessarily eliminated by entry into paid work (2003: 5).

[8] There is another potential tension in Sure Start's aims, as the involvement of local parents in the programme boards is emphasised, but it seems unlikely that this would be possible for paid

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed the historical treatment of lone mothers in policy and shown that while the treatment of lone mothers has changed over time, New Labour have recast the basis of the moral hierarchy of lone mothers from a concern with a particular sexual morality to an emphasis on participation in the formal labour market. New Labour have promoted paid work as integral to the role of the 'good lone mother' and through the NDLP have highlighted the benefits of paid work in terms of higher incomes, moral improvement and social inclusion. I have also considered the Sure Start programme, another of New Labour's policies concerned with social exclusion and child poverty, and argued that changes in the aims of Sure Start create tensions within the programme, between the promotion of good early childhood experiences, the forging of close bonds between parents and children and community-based social inclusion, with the increasing emphasis on the employment of parents.

New Labour do not necessarily misrepresent the benefits of paid work, (some lone mothers may experience the transition to paid work as financially, morally and socially improving); the problem lies with their construction of paid work in overwhelmingly positive terms and the implications of this for unpaid work and the care of young children by lone mothers. The valorisation of paid work is written into the welfare system with the determination to "make work pay" and with the tax credit system. The paid work ethic is promoted to lone mothers by New Labour, but in a way that abstracts the value of paid work from the realities of the lives of lone mothers, who may find combining the roles of paid worker and carer of young children very difficult. The increasing concern with paid work in Sure Start at the national level, suggests increasing emphasis on social inclusion in terms of employment rather than in terms of, say, participation in local services. Again, this may not fit into the lives of lone mothers, or with values they might

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working lone mothers.

hold around the proper relationship between the care of young children and paid work.

In the second part of the thesis, I consider the implications of participation in paid work in the context of the realities of the lives of lone mothers by analysing their interview accounts (see chapters six and seven). The importance of unpaid caring work to lone mothers (and to wider society) is considered throughout chapters five to nine and in chapter ten I show that some lone mothers participate in training as an alternative route to make social networks. In chapter eleven, I suggest some implications of these findings for social policy and articulations of the ethic of care. Before this, in chapter four, I describe the fieldwork process and the methodological issues raised by this study.

Chapter four

Methodology

In this chapter I describe the research design of the fieldwork element of this thesis. My aims here are to make the process of researching explicit, to explain the methodology of my study, to show how the sample of lone mothers was accessed, how the content of the interview schedule was formulated, how the interviews were conducted and how the accounts were analysed. I also consider the implications of giving payments to research participants, a practice adopted in my study. In doing this, I show how entering the field and process of doing research, shapes the research design.

From research proposal to interview schedule: the development and design of a research project

As suggested in chapter one, a key concern of this thesis is the social worlds of lone mothers and a desire to combine the usual emphasis in research on paid work in the lives of lone mothers with an approach which illuminates areas of the lives of lone mothers that they consider to be important. This also enables me to look at whether the government's agenda for lone mothers and the construction of the 'good lone mother' in policy, (see chapter three) is in tune with the feelings, attitudes and experiences of lone mothers themselves. My interest in creating a piece of research where these broader aspects of lone mothers' lives could be studied was not built into the initial research proposal. In this section I describe how my project developed from the research proposal to the empirical work that was actually undertaken. In charting the development of the research in this way, I owe a debt to Anne Oakley's *Social Support and Motherhood: the Natural History of a Research Project* (1992). In this book, one of Oakley's aims is to contextualise her research account, "within 'a sociology of the research process' (Platt 1976) that centres on the telling of a story about how and why the research came into being, and what happened when it did" (1992: viii). By describing the

research process I am able to reflect on the way that going into the field, the difficulties in recruiting participants and how the accounts given during the interviews, shaped the developing research design.

At the research proposal stage, this project was very much situated in terms of policy concerns, as can be seen from the following exert from my application for funding. Here the planned programme of fieldwork is described,

"In-depth interviews with lone mothers will form the core of the study. The sample will consist of two main groups of lone mothers in receipt of income support, none of whom are in paid work. All the mothers will be interviewed twice. One group will consist of ten women whose youngest child is two or three years old, and who have had contact with Sure Start (which targets families with children under four), but who have not yet had contact with New Deal. The second group will consist of ten women whose youngest child is four or five years old, and who will be imminently summoned for compulsory interviews under the revisions to the New Deal... [a]pproximately a year later all the women will be interviewed again. The participants in the first half of the sample will now have received an invitation for an interview with a New Deal personal adviser. However from April 2001 these interviews will be mandatory for the second set of participants if they are in receipt of income support as their youngest child will now be over five years old. By the time of the second interview these participants will have had formal contact with the New Deal programme and may have joined the scheme, moved into paid work or decided not to pursue these options...

> In the second round of interviews the course lone mothers have followed will be clear and the ways they have negotiated the different and potentially conflicting demands of New Deal and Sure Start evident. In this round of interviews any changes in the participants' orientation to paid work will be explored. It will be important to assess the impetus for any changes and the understandings lone mothers hold about them. A move into paid work could be a pragmatic response to the New Deal and to New Labour's promise to 'make work pay'; so paid employment is more financially rewarding than 'dependence' on benefits. Whether paid work now has any meaning as a mechanism for social inclusion will also be examined as will whether the New Deal has engendered any deeper shift in attitudes. For women who have experienced Sure Start and the New Deal it will be possible to evaluate Standing's (1999) suggestion that emphasis on the importance of parental involvement in local contexts can inhibit the take-up of paid work, or if the 'moral rationality' the New Deal proposes is a more strongly felt influence" (Head 1999).

At this stage, the focus of the research was on the delivery of the NDLP and Sure Start at the local level and how these policies would impact on the lives of lone mothers. I planned to conduct two interviews with two groups of mothers comparing their paid work orientations over time and, for some, after contact with the New Deal. However, for a number of reasons, the fieldwork did not follow this course. The roll-out of the NDLP, did not happen in the way indicated by policy documents at the time the proposal was written, meaning that NDLP interviews would not be mandatory for lone mothers with children aged four or

five during the timescale of the fieldwork. Therefore the rationale for interviewing each lone mother twice was no longer present. Also, from reviewing the literature it became clear that, while the combined impact of the NDLP and Sure Start on lone mothers was under-researched, the field of lone mother research was already dominated by studies where paid work and childcare were central concerns. I became increasingly interested in the ways in which the policy and research agendas on lone motherhood, might differ from the life priorities of lone mothers and how the caring responsibilities of lone motherhood were experienced by women in receipt of income support. In addition to these factors, once in the field, it soon became obvious that recruiting participants would be difficult and time-consuming and so it would not be possible to conduct two interviews with each woman in the time available for the fieldwork.

From the outset it was planned that this study would be based on qualitative in-depth interviews. With this method I would be able to examine the experiences and feelings of lone mothers around the usual paid work/care areas but it would also allow a space for experiences, issues and priorities that were not directly anticipated in the interview schedule to be voiced. This approach also reflects the influence of feminist writings on the project, as qualitative methods are often, though not exclusively, adopted in feminist research. Qualitative methods, "allow for an exploration of the quality rather than the quantity of experiences; they allow for the study of meanings, and of processes, rather than the relationships between events [to be accessed]" (Oakley 1992: 17). This approach to research is a feminist one as it privileges and seeks to understand and analyse the ways that women understand and experience their social world. Other influences on the nature of this research were studies by Pember Reeves (1979) Gavron (1966), Marsden (1973) and Holman (1981, 2000). In common these works share Gavron's (1966: 46) aim to "reveal something of the nature and quality of the lives being led by women [and men] today" and mostly share an interest in the lives of people living in poverty. A final influence was the work of Williams and Popay (1999), who identify four "conceptual dimensions for analysis" for critical welfare research,

"1 the welfare subject;
2 the social topography of enablement and constraint;
3 the institutional and discursive context of policy formation and implementation;
4 the contextual dynamics of social and economic change" (Williams and Popay 1999: 179)

Although my research design shifted over time (see below), I attempted to take these four fields into account and adapted this critical welfare research paradigm for my methodological framework. Figure 1 shows how this was put into place and how the methodological framework links with the structure of this thesis.

Fig 1. Methodological Framework

Welfare subject (lone mother)

Interviews with 20 lone mothers, schedule arranged around themes of motherhood, family and friends; local services; work and training; and neighbourhood. Data was generated on experiences of motherhood, the appropriate relationship between paid work and care of children, personal relationships, social networks, caring activities, experience of paid work and plans, use of local services, home and local area (see chapters five to ten).

Local context

Mapping the local labour market, local services, building a profile of the area (this chapter). Links with Sure Start and the NDLP were established to facilitate access to potential interviewees and to hear the experiences of professionals working in the area (see appendix II).

National context

Political discourses around paid work and lone motherhood and employment and welfare policy (see chapter three).

Wider social and economic context

Changes in labour markets and nature of paid work.

Changing household and family structures (see chapters one and two).

I developed a loosely structured interview schedule, arranged around four main

areas: motherhood, family and friends; local services; work and training; and neighbourhood (see appendix I). The questions on the schedule, arranged under each of the four topics, were designed to generate rich qualitative data on the ways lone mothers negotiated the local provision of services, and also on their social worlds and experiences of mothering to provide data for analysis to move towards filling in the gaps noted in chapters one to three. In line with the existing lone mother research, discussed in chapter one, I sought data on the orientations to paid work and care for lone mothers but also on their personal relationships and social worlds, an area that has been neglected. In terms of chapter two, this meant seeking accounts of the experience of raising children and the other relationships they were in that involved caring practices and looking at how engagement in care and paid work were understood. The focus of chapter three, New Labour's construction of the good lone mother, relates to the image of the 'good mother' in the appropriate relationships of paid work and lone motherhood held by the interviewees and also to their experiences of local services. The fourth area of the interview schedule, 'neighbourhood', was influenced by Duncan and Edwards' research (see chapter one) and William and Popay's critical welfare research paradigm which both suggest the importance of the local context for understanding the actions of welfare subjects.

Changing the sample and choosing the area: why one local area?

As described above, because the focus of my research shifted and the NDLP was not implemented as anticipated, the criteria for selecting participants in the project and the research design had to be revised. From the outset, three neighbouring areas of south Bristol, Hartcliffe, Withywood and Highridge, were identified as the location for the fieldwork. This bounding of the research to a particular local area was indicated by Williams and Popay's research model, where the local "social topography of enablement and constraint" is taken into account, and Duncan and Edwards' research where discourses around motherhood and paid work were found to be formed in locally based discourses. The Hartcliffe, Withywood and Highridge area fulfilled the needs of the research design as it has a relatively high number of lone mothers and at the time of the fieldwork was the only area in Bristol with a Sure Start programme well-established. The Hartcliffe, Withywood and Highridge project had received funding as a 'trailblazer'

programme and other Sure Start programmes were established in Bristol in subsequent rounds of funding. Prior to the fieldwork stage, contact was made with this Sure Start programme.

Before embarking on the fieldwork, I started to familiarise myself with the area by interviewing three NDLP Personal Advisers (PA/PAs) who had experience of working in south Bristol and by joining a Sure Start objective group. The Hartcliffe, Withywood and Highridge Sure Start had four groups to co-ordinate evaluations and research and to join-up services, one group for each of the four Sure Start objectives (see chapter three). The groups were attended by relevant Sure Start personnel and local workers from other related services. Following advice from the Sure Start team, on whom I depended for access, I became a member of the objective four group, charged with looking at 'Strengthening families and communities'. At this stage, it was envisaged that data from my participant observation with this group and qualitative interviews with the NDLP PAs would be analysed within this thesis. However, as the interviews with lone mothers proceeded it became clear that there was more data in these interviews alone that could be analysed and included in the project, so the focus shifted from a concern with the local translation of policy into services and how these were received by lone mothers, to a focus on the accounts of lone mothers in themselves. The contacts that I had made with local workers then became an invaluable resource for locating interviewees. Mapping the local context remained important in terms of gaining and communicating a sense of the local area, its services, social conditions and resources for lone mothers.

Hartcliffe, Withywood and Highridge

With one border on the southern edge of the city, Hartcliffe is physically isolated from the employment and services found in the rest of the city (HCC 2000: 11). The economic decline of the area began in the 1970s with the closure of the tobacco factories that had historically been located there. Hartcliffe has one of the highest concentrations of social housing in the South West, with housing built during the 1950s to 1970s (HWCP*a*, HWCP*b*). The Hartcliffe ward is rated 9th most deprived ward in Bristol on the *Indices of Multiple Deprivation* health

domain index and is at the relatively high position of 1500th most deprived ward in the country. At the local level concern has been expressed over the high demand for primary health care, the number of lone mothers in the area experiencing depression and the high rates of long-term limiting illnesses and high mortality rates for under 65 year olds (Bristol Urban II 2000: 15). A number of schemes are involved in the regeneration of the Hartcliffe area and the Sure Start programme is part of this. This was a trailblazer project and up to March 2002 £3,161,682 has been awarded to this programme (Wills 2001). The area is well served in terms of facilities for children and there are a range of training courses open to mothers where a crèche for children is provided. There is a low rate of car ownership in the area, 44% of households do not have access to a car (HCC 2000: 11). In August 1998 there were 890 Income Support claimants in the Hartcliffe ward, 11% of all adults aged over 16 years. This is 3% higher than the overall figure for Great Britain and 2% more than the average for the city of Bristol (National Statistics 2001a). Of these 890 income support claimants, 270 were in receipt of the lone parent premium (National Statistics 2001b). Appendix II gives a detailed profile of the area.

In the next section, I describe the process of recruiting interviewees, how the interviews were conducted and analysed and explore the role and implications of payments to participants in qualitative research.

Is there anybody out there? Recruiting lone mothers, payments and qualitative methods

I began the long process of recruiting interviewees in March 2002; posters and leaflets were placed at family centres in the area and at the Gatehouse centre. At this stage the leaflets asked for lone mothers who were in receipt of income support and had a youngest, or only, child aged between two and six years old. It was decided that the youngest child of the mother should be over two years old, as by this age the mother might have begun to think about entering paid work. The age limit of six years old was set so that the sample would include some mothers

of children who were not yet in full time education, so the issue of combining paid work and motherhood might be more keenly felt. These posters and leaflets were not successful in attracting interviewees. After three months, only three interviews had been conducted. During this time I began to revise the leaflets for interviewees in order to make the research more appealing and to broaden the criteria, so more lone mothers would be eligible to participate. The criterion of "being in receipt of income support" was removed from the leaflets, in case the mention of benefits was off-putting to potential interviewees, as was suggested to me by one local worker. The age range of the youngest/only child was revised, to ask for lone mothers, "[w]hose youngest (or only) child is aged six years or under". This not only meant a larger number of lone mothers would be eligible to take part in the research, but also meant an assumption was no longer being made that mothers of under twos might be different in their attitudes to mothers of over twos. A local worker I knew from the objective four group attempted to persuade a lone mother she knew to take part in the research and the woman (who was eventually interviewed) commented that she didn't realise I would be able to do "home visits". With this information in mind, I amended the leaflets to note that "[i]nterviews can take place in your own home or at another preferred location".[9]

Even with these amendments to the interview schedule, it proved difficult to recruit more interviewees. Diane Reay notes that in feminist research, access to female research participants tends to be depicted as unproblematic, however in her research with white, middle-class, university educated women, 'easy access' proved to be a myth, as women tended to say they were "too busy" to participate (1995: 205). Reay persisted in her search for interviewees by following up women who said they were 'too busy' and by abandoning certain criteria for her sample (1995: 208). At this stage of my research it was not entirely clear why lone mothers were reluctant to volunteer to participate; though other members of the objective four group suggested an unwillingness to be in contact with yet more 'officials'. Initially there seemed to be some reluctance from a few local workers to allow me to visit groups directly to talk to mothers who were using services they were involved in. However, over time and perhaps because of my regular

[9] See appendix III for the final version of the recruitment leaflet for lone mothers.

attendance at the objective four meetings, this was overcome. Indeed, the access to mothers that was granted to me by local workers became my key route to finding interviewees. I knew that my posters were displayed at a number of family centres and that leaflets had been distributed by local workers at a number of groups, so the mothers I would meet face-to-face by visiting groups might well already know about my study yet had not contacted me to take part. Around this time, I received a phone call from a lone mother, Claire, asking for more details about the research, and specifically if there was an 'incentive' to take part; she mentioned that a research team had visited a group recently and paid interviewees for their research participation. At this stage I wasn't paying interviewees, and Claire declined to take part. Claire mentioned this exchange to a local worker I also knew, and subsequently was persuaded by the worker's endorsement of the research to participate without payment. However, this phone call and the poor recruitment rate of participants led to the decision that meeting mothers face-to-face, without offering an 'incentive' to participate would be dangerous strategy, as if no more lone mothers were recruited then it might be difficult to negotiate access to groups again, even with the new 'incentive'. So the posters and leaflets were amended once again to note (in bold!), that "£10 will be paid for each interview".[10]

I revisited the centres where my posters and leaflets were displayed to replace the old posters and leaflets with the new ones and to ask local workers if I would be able to drop into groups they were running. A couple of workers were unwilling for this to happen and again said that they would distribute the leaflets, or that it would be difficult for me to speak to mothers as they ran a group where children were dropped off by their parents. Others workers were of more assistance and one fellow member of the objective four group drove me across the estate to visit a group that she ran. I was able to visit four different groups and from these recruited the majority of my interviewees. The combination of offering £10 to each interviewee and meeting the women face-to-face before the interview was a much more successful strategy than displaying the posters and leaflets alone; one lone mother said that two people had given her the leaflet and she had thought

[10] I wrote to the four lone mothers who had already taken part, to let them know of this change to

about ringing the number but decided not to as she was uncertain about who she would be speaking to, and she asked directly if I would be the interviewer.

At the beginning of the fieldwork stage it was anticipated that the interviewees would be contacted by snowballing from each participant. However, this only happened in two instances, when Joanne was present at the interview with Elaine and then said she would be happy to also take part and when Donna passed on a leaflet about the project to Laura. In part, this reflected that fact that I was recruiting lone mothers from groups, so that it was likely that I would have already met the other lone mothers they knew. As the fieldwork progressed, it emerged that this was also revealing of the social networks of lone mothers (see also Duncan and Edwards 1999: 18), the importance of family networks and the different experiences of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in the area (see chapter nine). At this stage of the fieldwork I was aiming to interview at least 30 women, however by the time all avenues for reaching participants had been exhausted, 20 women had been interviewed. Fortunately, by this point similar themes in the accounts were already beginning to emerge and repeat and it was clear that I already had more data than could be analysed fully. This fact and the pressures of time meant that the fieldwork stage was closed once 20 interviews had been conducted and after this time I was not contacted by any other potential interviewees directly. Although there were problems in accessing interviewees, once the women had agreed to take part, all but one of the interviews went ahead as planned. On the one occasion the interviewee failed to turn up, (because her sister was in labour) the interview was rearranged and then went ahead unproblematically.

All of the interviewees were in receipt of income support and only one was engaged in paid work (she did one shift a week in a local shop). The criteria for the interviewees had not excluded lone mothers in paid work and their absence in the sample was a reflection of the way the interviewees were recruited, during the daytime from children's centres, when employed mothers may have been at work. Also local data suggested that only a small proportion of lone mothers with

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the study and enclosed their £10 payment.

children in my target age group were in employment.[11] This absence of employed lone mothers in the sample was not problematic, while it meant that I cannot comment on the caring responsibilities of lone mothers in paid work, it did mean that all of the participants had in common the experience of being a lone mother reliant on income support. From this common base, I could then analyse differences in their understandings of paid work, home and training.

Cash for answers? The implications of paying interviewees in qualitative social research

Although not in my original research design, a payment of £10 in cash to each interviewee was used as an incentive for lone mothers to take part in the project. Paying participants for their involvement in research is commonplace in medical and psychological studies and is often used in surveys in social research. In these areas a literature has built up which considers the impact, effectiveness and wider implications of giving money in return for participation. However, in the field of qualitative social research, much less attention has been given to the practice of paying participants, with regard to both how widespread this practice is and the implications of making such payments. In this section, I draw on some of the literature from other disciplines to suggest some of the issues that qualitative researchers should consider when thinking of making payments to participants. As little attention has so far been given to this issue in qualitative research, this discussion is not intended to be a comprehensive review of relevant literature from other fields, but to raise some of the main issues in paying participants and to reflect on the implications of payments in my study specifically.

In a paper on 'Paying respondents and informants' Thompson writes,

> "payments are rarely considered in designing qualitative research... there has tended to be a move away from the payment of respondents where research is particularly concerned with explaining social phenomena, because payments are believed to increase the possibility of contamination or bias" (1996: 2).

However, the basis for these claims is not clear and it might be that payment in

[11] This finding was reported to me by a local Sure Start worker, based on a survey they had commissioned.

qualitative research is more commonplace than some researchers assume, due to the lack of discussion of payments in the publications of research projects. In fairness to Thompson, it could also be that payments in qualitative research have become increasingly common in the years after the publication of her paper on this topic. There does appear to be a tendency for the fact that research participants were paid to be rather hidden away in the accounts of research. This is the case in Rowlingson and McKay's study of lone mothers; in the appendix they note, "Respondents were interviewed in their own homes and paid a £10 payment as a thank you for their time" (1998: 213). In Young and Willmott's study of *The Symmetrical Family*, the instructions for interviewers are reproduced in an appendix; "... we shall pay everybody who completes a diary a fee of £1. Along with the diary booklet you will leave each diarist a pen (which he can keep)..." (1973: 351). Although, this is not a payment for participation in a qualitative interview, it may suggest that payment in social research has a longer, though largely uncharted, history than might be assumed. I have been employed on four research projects, each based at least partly on qualitative interviews, and in each case the participants have received some form of payment. Though the payment of interviewees may not be problematic in itself, it is an issue that should be reflexively considered by the social research community and addressed in research projects where payments are made.

In considering the issues around paying participants in research, the first questions to address are why is payment being offered for participation? And, relatedly, what is payment being given for, exactly? For Rowlingson and McKay, payment is in gratitude for the time the interviewee has given to the study; Young and Willmott told their interviewers that payment was given to diarists as "the completion of the diary entails some time and effort on the part of the informant" (1973: 351). Thompson argues that payment can be a means of recognising and "beginning to equalise" the uneven power relationships between interviewer and interviewee. Clearly there is also a more pragmatic reason for offering payments to participants: payment can act as an incentive to recruit study participants, as was the case in my research. On this issue, from the field of addiction studies, McKeganey writes, "When it comes to participation in research, money, it seems,

is the motivation that hardly dare speak its name" (2001: 1237). In survey and medical research there is acknowledgement and discussion of the use of payment as an incentive to recruit participants. In these fields, experiments and literature reviews have been conducted to assess the impact of payments on response rates. Edwards et al (2002: 1183) reviewed 292 randomised control trials which had used postal questionnaires and found that a "monetary incentive" more than doubled the odds of a response. Other measures also influenced the response rate; the odds of a response was more than doubled when questionnaires were sent by recorded delivery and, personalised questionnaires, coloured ink, using first class post and enclosing a stamped return envelope also had a positive impact on the response rate. In a review of the use of incentives (here prepaid) in surveys of welfare populations, Singer and Kulka (2002) concluded that

> "Consistent with an extensive literature on the use of incentives with mail surveys, prepaid monetary incentives seem to be useful in recruiting low-income and minority respondents into interviewer-mediated surveys, even when the burden imposed on participants is relatively low. The use of incentives probably should be part of the design and strategy for all such surveys"

In survey research where the data will be analysed quantitatively it is important that a representative sample is accessed to avoid bias in the sample, so payments are used as an incentive to attract respondents who might otherwise not participate. Representativeness and reliability are not such concerns in qualitative research, where the emphasis is on the quality, richness and validity of the accounts given. In addition to this, questionnaires are conventionally not thought to pose the possibility of harm to the well-being of the participant, unlike qualitative research, which might be more likely to promote the "uncalled for self-knowledge, or unnecessary anxiety", that the British Sociology Association's (BSA) *Statement of Ethical Practice* (2002) warns against. The ethical considerations around payments to participants might be more pronounced in qualitative research than quantitative research.

In my project, payments to interviewees seemed to be crucial in recruiting participants, though this is difficult to assess with confidence as this happened at the same time as face-to-face recruitment. The key ethical question when paying for participation in research, is whether the inducement of the payment

compromises the principle of participation on the basis of "*freely* given informed consent" (BSA 2002, my emphasis). This is a key principle of the BSA's statement of ethical practice, though the implications of payment in research are overlooked here. Sullivan and Cain (2004: 615) argue that in studies with victims of domestic violence, payment should be made and should be "commensurate with the amount of time and how difficult their participation might be (emotionally as well as physically)". They go on to advise,

> "[c]ompensation for participating in any research should be high enough to show respect for women's time and expertise but not so high that it might coerce women into participating when they would rather not" (Sullivan and Cain 2004: 615).

In practice, however, the dividing line between an incentive payment and an amount that is coercive is not so easy to define, particularly in welfare and poverty studies. For example, one of my interviewees, who had forgotten she would be receiving a £10 payment, remarked that now she would be able to put some money in her gas meter; without this payment she would have had no money until a few days after the interview. For potential interviewees in this kind of situation, it might be difficult to turn down any amount, no matter how small, in exchange for an interview. It is therefore possible that the £10 payment might have compromised the *free* informed consent of some of my interviewees. Of course, payment does not mean that the interviewee relinquishes any control over the telling of their story and it may be that any women who did take part because of the payment, were then less forthcoming in the interview than others. As I was aware of the potential for the payment to interviewees to be coercive in gaining participants, and did not want any interviewees to leave the interview feeling they had said more than they wanted because of the payment, I took care in how the handing over of the money took place. At the beginning of each interview I thanked the participant for letting me come to her house or for taking the time to meet up with me, and handed them a £10 note in an envelope. I told each participant that this money was for agreeing to be interviewed and that they were free to answer the questions as they wanted, to say if there was something they didn't want to talk about, and to end the interview at any time if they wished. This was in addition to making the usual points about confidentiality, that accounts would be anonymised by changing their names and certain details and

how I anticipated using the interview data. For the interviewees recruited from groups in the area, I made it clear that although I was partly working with Sure Start, I wasn't employed by them and I wouldn't report to Sure Start anything they told me without anonymising the account.

Without conducting a piece of follow up research to ask my interviewees why they participated, my comments on the impact of the £10 payment can only be based on my impressions of the impact this had and on the comments that a few of the interviewees made. From the way the interviews proceeded, I didn't feel that any of the interviewees felt unduly pressured to take part, or found the interview a difficult or unpleasant experience. I believe that the £10 payment was the main reason for participating for only a few of the women, this was because they did not seem very interested in the questions that were being asked and were reluctant to expand on their answers, as was their prerogative. However, for the other participants it seemed there were a variety of reasons and motivations for participating. This was Fry and Dwyer's (2001) finding in a study of the motivations of research participants. Their research was with 150 injecting drug users (IDU) and they concluded, "...IDU motivations for research participation are often multi-dimensional, rarely to do with economic gain alone, and not necessarily defined by direct benefits or gains to themselves" (2001: 1324).

As Diane Reay writes, the orthodoxy is that women like being interviewed and like being able to have other women to talk to (1995: 205). It seems almost compulsory to refer to the classic papers on feminist interviewing by Oakley (1981*b*) and Finch's (1984) 'It's great to have someone to talk to...' on this topic. For some of the women, perhaps particularly the 'outsiders' in the area, who tended to be more isolated (see chapter nine), this did seem to be part of their motivation for taking part. These women talked about feeling lonely and being 'stuck' in the same routine, so that a visit from an interviewer might well have been experienced as an interesting diversion. For one woman, who seemed quite shy and unconfident, and, it transpired, had been through some traumatic times, the interview might have served as providing someone to talk to, and there also seemed to be an element of people using the research interview to gain a sense of

achievement, as well as to make sense of their own experiences and to hopefully help others. Thompson comments that paying her interviewees "helped avoid the bias which might have resulted from the omission of those who declined to participate because they put a greater value on their time, energy and views" (1996: 5). In my research, I wondered if the payment worked in a different way, attracting women to take part who felt curious about the project, but thought they did not have anything worthwhile to say, an idea which hopefully was proved wrong once the interview had taken place.

Other women seemed to be motivated by a desire to 'help out', or by the hope that the research might affect policy for lone mothers. For these women, I believe the interview was approached as more of a reciprocal exchange: they were helping me out by taking part in the research and they were compensated for their time and telling their stories, with the £10 payment. For women who were uncertain about the research, the payment alone was not enough inducement to take part. This is true in the example cited above of the interviewee who had had two leaflets about the project, but had not phoned me as she was unsure who would be doing the interview; here the face-to-face recruitment was, perhaps, most important. In the interview with Elaine, Joanne was present to assess what the interview was like; she said that she would like to take part but had been suspicious of giving out her address. Again here, although the £10 payment was important, meeting the lone mother in person was crucial.

Aside from these questions of the possible coercive nature of payments, other ethical, methodological and practical issues arise from paying interviewees. At one group where I recruited interviewees, a lone mother (who became an interviewee) remarked, "it's a shame that people have to be paid to take part in things like this". Her words reflect the idea that social research is part of a common good, and for this reason participants should give their time and accounts without expecting or getting something in return. This is also seen in the BSA statement of ethical practice, where sociological research is said to contribute to the "well-being of society" (2002: point 5). Although it is not clear how widespread payments in social research have been in the past, if this increasingly

taking place, then it may be that the act of pay reflects a decline of belief in a kind of common good. There may also be parallels with the rise of talk shows, reality television, 'real-life' stories in magazines and newspapers and the like, where emotions, opinions, attitudes and stories of relationships are commodified for public viewing and are sometimes financially rewarded. People may now have more a sense that their story is 'worth something'. Paying for research also adds to this and establishes or perpetuates a "culture of expectation" that involvement in research will be rewarded financially (McKeganey 2001: 1237). From the phone call with Claire, discussed above, it seemed that for some people in this area, this culture was in place. The consequences of payments for research involvement might mean that it will become difficult for researchers with small budgets to carry out fieldwork (McKeganey 2001: 1238), and this might particularly be the case for postgraduate students. It might be suggested that this could be overcome by designing research that is more salient to the lives of the participants, but in the case of research with groups who feel powerless or devalued in society, this might not be enough to induce participation.

A practical issue raised by the issue of payments to research participants is how much participants should be paid and in what form the payment should be made. Sullivan and Cain do not suggest a specific level of payment but write that women should be "fairly compensated" (2004: 615). McKeaganey's opinion is that "we should be able to pay respondents an amount of money to cover their time and costs" (2001: 1238). Again a specific level is not suggested and the implication here is that the 'time' of some respondents is more costly than others. Thompson states that "[i]t is not invariably the case that respondents deserve to be paid", arguing that the level of payment that could by given to, for example, a managing director of a multi-national company, would be derisory (1996: 3). Also, Thompson is working from the assumption that payments serve to equalise uneven power relationships, which would not be necessary in this type of research. From the experience of my research, I am not convinced that payment serves this function, for the researcher is still the 'owner' of the research, and has greater control over the interaction; I would suggest that payment is more effective when used to gain the interest of participants.

In my project, I decided to pay £10 mainly for budgetary reasons as this was the largest amount that I could cover per participant using my research expenses. There were also institutional constraints here as the University of Bristol stipulated that £12 is the highest amount that can be paid per participant. Sullivan and Cain (2004) advocate giving cash to the research participant if possible, rather than a postal order, cheque or voucher. I would endorse this advice; participants in social research often have little or no control over the design, analysis and publication of research and research often takes place with populations who may be relatively powerless in society. Giving cash is a small gesture to give participants some control and freedom. However, in some studies money may need to be posted after the interview or another form of payment given if researchers feel unsafe in carrying cash in unfamiliar areas. Payments to research participants may lead to issues around confidentiality and anonymity that need further scrutiny and this was an oversight in my project. Although I made these guarantees to my participants to be able to claim reimbursement of the payments I made to them, I had to ask them to fill in a receipt, which then went out of my hands to the university finance office. This is also an issue that I found in other research projects where payment has been given to interviewees.

Finally, some researchers have suggested that paying interviewees might mean that they "tell us what he or she feels we want to know", rather than giving an 'authentic' account of their experience, views and attitudes (McKeganey 2001: 1237). This perception of the corrupting power of money on the account of events, is visible elsewhere. In criminal investigations and court proceedings, the practice of giving gifts or making payments to witnesses has increasingly been subjected to scrutiny, particularly after the collapse of the Damilola Taylor murder trial in 2002. The presiding judge ruled that the evidence of the key witness was unreliable, after it was revealed she had been bought clothes and two mobile phones by a police officer and that she had referred to a newspaper reward in her police interviews (BBC 2002). The judge feared that the evidence of the witnesses was tainted by these gifts. Payments by newspapers to witnesses have recently been subject to greater regulation and the trial of five men accused of

plotting to kidnap Victoria Beckham and her sons collapsed when the evidence of a witness who had been paid £10,000 by a newspaper was judged to be unreliable (Schöpflin and Darrall 2003). Again these kind of payments are found distasteful by some as they override the idea of a common good where 'telling the truth' and aiding the course of justice should not have to be financially rewarded. While payments to witnesses by police and journalists is assumed by many to have a corrupting influence, in social research it has tended to be assumed that payments act as incentives to participation. The possible manufacture of accounts or identities when payments are involved is an issue that needs to be addressed in more depth in qualitative research. The tendency of participants to differentiate between a public account (for an interviewer) and private account has been documented (Cornwell 1984) and it is possible that this effect could be exaggerated by offering payments to participants. For qualitative researchers, these issues are complicated by the existing debates around the interpretation of interview accounts and how qualitative data should be analysed. In my research I attempted to minimise the impact of the payments by managing the handing over of the cash in the manner described above and by emphasising that a starting point for my research was an interest in lone mothers' views of how they should be treated in policy, rather than following what the government say. Ultimately, although there are these ethical, practical and methodological issues in paying participants, without providing payments my project may have had to have been radically redesigned. Payments also meant that while I walked away from the interviews with what I wanted, the research accounts (Reay 1995: 212), the participants also benefited immediately and directly.

The Interview Encounters And The Data Analysis

In this last section, the discussion aims to shed light on the conduct and setting of the interviews and the process of data analysis. Like the rest of this chapter, the emphasis is on aspects of the processes of interviewing and analysis, to show how the activity of doing fieldwork shapes the research design and the research findings. Here I also reflect on my impact, as the interviewer, on the interview accounts given. This orientation to the presentation of the methodology locates

my account in the tradition of feminist research methods where attention is paid to illuminating the relationship between the "process and the product, between doing and knowing" (Letherby 2004: 175).

As described above, the majority of my interviewees were recruited from groups and as I had established good relationships with a number of local workers I was able to offer lone mothers the choice of being interviewed at their home or in a room at each group I attended. 12 of the interviews took place in the homes of the interviewees and 8 at groups; the child or children of the lone mother were present at 10 of the interviews, for all or part of the time. Sin has noted that

> "[w]ritings on the theory and practice of interviewing have largely neglected the specificities of settings and activities" and the impact of the spatial context on the interviewer-interviewee dynamics and on the account produced (2003: 305).

In my research, the setting and events that occurred during the interview certainly had some impact on the account produced and the way the interview unfolded. For example, in interviews where children were present, they sometimes acted as a diversion an interviewee could turn to to have more time to consider a question, though sometimes the interruptions of children would mean an interviewee lost her train of thought. Some interviews took place in a room provided by a local group, and these often began in a more formal way than home based interviews. In the interview with Rebecca, she received a phone call from her boyfriend and this led to a change of direction in the interview as we then talked about their relationship, his family and the financial problems she was experiencing. Interviews at children's group tended to be more constrained in terms of time, as the interviewee would be expected to collect her child from the group at a particular time. The interviews varied in length from 40 minutes to over two and a half hours, though most were around an hour long. In qualitative research, the impact of the setting on the data produced is not problematic but indicative of the way that the research accounts produced are "situated and contextual" and a "co-production" between the interviewer, the interviewee (Mason 2002: 62-3), the setting of the interview and events which may occur during it.

The interviews were arranged around the four themes: motherhood, family and

friends; local services; work and training; and neighbourhood and for each of these themes I wrote a series of questions that could be asked. My aim in the interviews was not to ask all of these questions to every interviewee, but to have a conversation about each of these themes that would encompass the majority of the questions I had devised. With this loose and semi-structured interview schedule, I did not conduct pilot interviews. I would argue that in qualitative research piloting is more useful in uncovering themes that have not been anticipated, rather than to check the wording or interpretation of questions. The factors of timescale and the difficulty in recruiting participants, also meant that piloting was not done. The nature of qualitative interviewing means that, to some extent, each interview is partly contingent upon the last. In this project, although I had anticipated asking some questions on home and neighbourhood, the experience and importance of constructing a decent home, was a theme that emerged in the fourth interview (with Donna) and I then ensured that more attention was paid to this in subsequent interviews.

The interview themes were not addressed in any particular order, and I tried to make the interviews more informal and conversational by moving from section to section as it became appropriate or relevant to the turn of the conversation. I began most of the interviews by asking the interviewee to tell me about their child/(ren) and experience of motherhood. When the move to other themes was not occurring 'naturally' in the conversation, I tried to ask very open-ended questions to allow the interviewee to talk about what seemed most important to them on that particular topic; for example, I would say " Tell me about your plans for the future", as a way to ask about future plans for paid work or what was important in their life, or "What is it like to live here?", to ask about home and local area. In this way, the process of qualitative interviewing generated new material that wasn't initially anticipated and changed both the course of subsequent interviews and the structure of the research project. The way that home emerged as so important in the lives of lone mothers, also shows the disjuncture between the government agenda for lone mothers, where paid work and childcare issues are privileged as most important, and the priorities of lone mothers. My initial oversight on the importance of home is perhaps related to the

different relationship that I, as a childless woman in paid work (of sorts), has to 'home' in comparison to lone mothers who are full time carers of their young children. For them, home is the site of their caring labour, where much of their time is spent and for some has become a symbol of their good mothering or of reaching a particular stage in their life, therefore home emerges more strongly in their accounts, than it did in the interview schedule I compiled. The place of home in the lives of lone mothers is considered in chapter nine.

Issues of power and difference are another aspect of the interviewer/interviewee dynamic that can impact on the accounts that are produced. The issue of matching interviewer and interviewees in terms of social characteristics is one that has a long history in research methods debates (see Pomeroy 1972, O'Connnell Davidson and Layder 1994: 130-131). In some ways my social characteristics placed me in a similar position to my interviewees, I am female and, like the majority of the interviewees, though not all of them, I am from a working class background. Although the interviewees were introduced to me as a researcher and I told them I was from the University of Bristol, from the interview accounts it did seem that I was not being identified in the same way as some other professionals with whom they might have dealings. For example, while Isabelle was very open with me and happy to answer any questions, she was adamant that she would not give any information to a NDLP PA in a compulsory interview. A few other interviewees made negative comments about people living in other 'posher' parts of the city. Although I usually did not say directly, I got the impression that most of the women assumed that I did not have children, as some interviewees explained aspects of their child's development without assuming this was a shared experience. Twelve of my interviewees were under 25. I was also in this age group at the time of the interviews and for some of the women this may have helped to make the interview seemed less intimidating, and was a contrast to many of the professionals in their lives. In chapter nine I make a distinction between the experiences of the lone mothers based on their identification as 'insiders' or 'outsiders' in the area, dependent on whether or not they had grown up there. I was obviously an 'outsider' in the area and this was clear from my accent, the fact that for home-based interviews I asked for directions, and the

questions I asked in the interviews. It is difficult for one researcher to say with any certainty how their position coloured the interview account, as it is impossible to know what an interviewee held back that might have been revealed to someone else; however I do think that my position as an 'outsider' of the area was beneficial, as it meant insiders would explain aspects of living in the area, and outsiders felt able to make negative comments.

As well as social identity, personality also affects interviewing style and accounts; O'Connell Davidson explains that her style is characterised more by "...sweet hypocrisy, plenty of nodding and meaningless affirmative noise than by pushy, challenging or incisive questioning" (1994: 221). Of course, interview style is also partly determined by making an assessment of each interviewee. With some women I listened sympathetically to their accounts and would agree with views which were not my own, to maintain the rapport established. With other women I had to find ways to bring them back to the themes of the interview, when time was limited and their stories were slipping away from my areas of interest; whereas with a few other women it seemed appropriate to be more challenging.

From data collection to analysis

All of the women agreed to have the interview tape recorded and the tapes were later fully transcribed. As I had conducted and transcribed all the interviews, I was familiar with the data before the analysis stage began in earnest. Each interviewee was given a pseudonym, and they were named alphabetically (missing out some letters), in the order that the interviews took place. This also helped me to recall the interviews, as did the fact that field notes had been written for each interview. This familiarity with the interviews and the relatively small number meant that it was feasible to analyse my data without the use of qualitative data analysis computer software. I read and reread the interviews a number of times and themes of importance began to emerge. Although this process has parallels with that advocated by grounded theory, this method was not followed in detail. Some themes that would be analysed had been interests from the beginning of the project, such as when did lone mothers plan to (re)enter paid work and what were their reasons for this. Others, as described above, emerged during the process of conducting the interviews or in the analysis, for example,

the importance of home. After this process of thinking about and reading the interviews, I devised a template with my themes of interest listed down the left hand side, each transcription was then copied into the relevant section and these 20 templates put together to form one long document, which was used to aid my analyses further. This meant that each occasion the interviewee had mentioned, for example, her experiences of paid work, these comments were together; it also meant that I could easily navigate the document to read all the comments made about, for example, the experience of doing housework, made by all the women. For the themes that emerged as most interesting and important, I then made a list which summarised the views or experiences of each woman and then made a diagram which illustrated this. In this way, the aim of my analysis was not to manufacture one story from the accounts, but to use the rich qualitative data that I had to explain the multiple meanings of, for example, paid work, in the lives of these lone mothers.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented an account of the research process and briefly described the local area in which this project was based. I have reflected on the development of the research design, from proposal stage to conducting interviews and shown how entering the field changes the nature of the original research design. I have described how interviewees were recruited and reflexively considered the role of payments to interview participants and my own impact on the research accounts. I then explained how the interviews were conducted and analysed.

In the following chapters, chapters five to ten, the interview accounts are used to discuss different areas of lone mothers lives and show how social policy and sociological concerns can be combined.

Chapter five

Experiences of paid work

In chapters one to four, I discussed the main orientations of lone mother research, explored some theoretical work on care and domestic labour, examined two pieces of New Labour policy that contain particular messages about motherhood and described the methodology of this research project. In the following five chapters, I present an analysis of the data generated from the interviews I conducted with 20 self-defined lone mothers. This part of the thesis begins by partly adopting the emphasis criticised in much lone mother research and that is New Labour's priority for lone mothers, paid work. The aim of this chapter is to relate the experiences of paid work that these lone mothers have had in the past and to consider the range of reasons they give for not being in paid work. This chapter fills in some of the background detail, for subsequent chapters where New Labour's promotion of paid work is compared to the understandings of lone mothers (chapters six and seven); and for chapter eight where I analyse the accounts of lone mothers regarding their planned timing of entry to paid work. In these chapters I argue that in the abstract, lone mothers share the values of New Labour policy around the importance of paid work, but have a more sophisticated understanding of the impact of paid work on their lives and hold particular values about the care of young children. In chapter nine, I turn to the theme of home, which emerged as significant in the course of the fieldwork; home was experienced in a variety of ways but for a number of women creating a decent home was a challenge and so in this chapter the definition of unpaid work is broadened. Here, attention is also given to the intimate relationships of lone mothers. In chapter ten, I consider the use of training courses by lone mothers and the different meanings and functions of training are considered. First of all, I discuss the experiences of paid work for the interviewees and for those who have been employed I consider the range of reasons given for leaving.

Experiences of paid work before becoming a mother

In the interviews discussions of paid work included experiences of paid work, current employment, experiences of school and training, and plans around paid work. Three of the interviewees had no or very limited experience of paid work. One of the women, Rebecca, aged 17, had never been in paid employment. Joanne, 21 years old, had a paper round as a teenager but had no employment experience since then. Kate, 23 years old, had limited work experience, having worked in a shop for a couple of weeks when she was 16. The other interviewees had all had some longer-term experience of paid work. For the majority, employment had been in factories, the service industry, care work and administration. Five women talked about jobs that either demanded a higher level of qualifications than the rest of the interviewees or of having more responsibility/seniority in their roles. Among these were four of the five women in the study who were older than 30. Two of these women, both outsiders in the area were educated to degree level; two were insiders in the area, one had 'A' Level qualifications, the other had received in-work training. These women had worked in the media, administration and community work. The fifth woman here, Gail, aged 23, an outsider in the area who had nine GCSEs. After school she entered a training scheme in retail administration and then continued to be employed by the company she was placed with for work experience and eventually reached a managerial role.

Only one of the interviewees was currently engaged in any paid work. She worked one shift a week in a local shop for £15.[12] All of the women expressed plans to (re)enter paid work at some time in the future; overall a strong attachment to the idea of paid work was expressed. Nearly all of the women had been employed before they had their child(ren) so it is possible to explore why the interviewees had left paid work. Six of the interviewees were not in paid work when they found out they were pregnant. One interviewee had been on long-term sick leave, and one was 16 and had just left foster care. Joanne found out about her pregnancy at a medical that was part of a job interview. Rebecca discovered she was pregnant the day before her GCSE exams began and did not return to

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[12] Lone parents are permitted to earn a maximum of £20 a week without their benefit levels

school; Kate had a very limited employment history and attributed her lack of desire to be in paid work to the negative influence of her ex-partner,

> Kate: I never wanted to work no, I didn't want to work, but then I fell pregnant with the twins [later miscarried] and then with [oldest son]. Oh, I did do a couple of weeks working in a bakery – I just had the wrong start in life, he [ex-partner] was the person - I shouldn't have met – he just dragged me down with him, but looking back now it was for a reason – he made me just grow up and think, he hurt me but he's gone so...

Four of the women left their employment, or in the case of Fiona her training course, quite early on in their pregnancy because of ill health. Paula, then aged 17, was doing agency factory work but had to give up her job,

> EH: and then when you found you were pregnant, did you keep working or -
> Paula: ...until I was about three or four months and then I stopped because, well, I had quite a lot of problems, I was in and out of hospital with pains and bleeding and that, so I was in for two, three days here and a day or two there so, and travel sick, I couldn't get on a bus without being sick

Ten of the women were in employment for the majority of their pregnancy,

> EH: so when did you stop working?
> Claire: I stopped – I worked right up to the last minute, I was about a week due off – it was that bad I couldn't even get out of bed in the morning, I was just like a bubble. You know, so I was working right up [until the birth]

Particularly interesting in this category are Tina and Yvonne who began work after discovering that they were pregnant. Yvonne had begun a college course, but left as she was not enjoying it, she then discovered she was pregnant,

> EH: so you found you were pregnant then you got a job?
> Yvonne: yeah, I found out I was pregnant and then my partner was working anyway but I felt, like I always have felt - like he supports me, he buys my fags and he'll buy my clothes and he'll buy my trainers when I need them, whatever, he buys all [their son's] stuff, but I feels guilty, I'd rather make a contribution towards the family, from myself, from my effort of work so I was just sat there thinking, "well he is working, I'm pregnant - I can't expect him to buy everything for the baby because it is going to be expensive, I'm going to have to contribute myself, so go out and get a job", - I started work, I think it was two weeks after I left my college course

Tina was doing a NVQ course when she became pregnant, and she describes how

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being adjusted.

she entered paid work, echoing Yvonne's reasons,

> Tina: ...when I did my GCSE's and got my grades back, I did go on to sixth form, but then I fell pregnant with him, so it was a case of - I had a talk with boyfriend and my mum, and my boyfriend was working anyway but we needed stuff then, so really I couldn't stay on at sixth form so I had to go and get a job then
> EH: once you were pregnant -
> Tina: yeah and we went half and bought things that we would need for him, and then I finished working when I was about eight months pregnant

Returning to paid work and leaving again

These accounts of paid work before and during pregnancy give us an indication of the paid work experience of the interviewees. However it does not account for the lack of engagement in paid work at the time of the interviews. The majority of the interviewees had not planned to return to work in the first years of the life of their child(ren). These women accounted for this in terms of wanting to be with their child(ren) full time in babyhood and early childhood and felt this was the right thing for them to do, this is explored in more detail in chapter eight.

Seven of the women had returned to paid work after the birth of their child. Beth, who left her ex-partner before she realised she was pregnant, returned to paid work part time when her son was a few months old while her mother cared for her son. This arrangement continued until her son was four years old, then Beth's grandmother required care and Beth left paid work to look after her. Fiona also returned to paid work supported by childcare that her mother provided, but after a few months left a job she didn't enjoy to care for her son full time. Elaine returned to work after the birth of her third child, but left again during a subsequent pregnancy and did not return. Elaine emphasised the financial and other drawbacks of combining lone motherhood and paid work to explain her decision,

> EH: so income support - is it difficult to manage?
> Elaine: yeah, the thing is that, I mean, it is very very difficult because in order – it's not worth going back to work on family credit, because you don't actually get any more money because I've done that and it doesn't work, you actually end up in some ways worse off...
> EH: in what ways are you worse off – in money or other ways?
> Elaine: well everything really, number one you've got a baby or a child – they are very very tiring... then you have to go to work tired and you come home and think "oh yeah I'll get the housework done and things", and you don't do it because you are so tired. And then there is frustration with the child as well, you know, "come

> on get up", you know, have got to get to the childminders for a certain time, and pushchairs and transport and what if the bus doesn't come, you know and there are just so many stresses on top of the stresses of having a child, that I don't think emotionally unless you had, unless you were in a really high paid job, if you were in a really high paid job - I would pay for somebody else to maybe clean my house once a week... now without the money I am just giving myself twice as much work for less money and that doesn't make sense to me

Melissa attempted to continue her part time job after she had separated from her husband, working three nights a week with her wages supplemented by family credit. Like, Elaine she found that the small financial gains of work and other stresses meant that it was not worthwhile,

> EH: well that is the good thing about seeing someone at a job centre, they are supposed to organise all your benefits for you. Did you find the people helpful?
> Melissa: not really no, they mucked it right up, I ended up having more rent, it was just a total nightmare, a total nightmare, and to be honest I was earning £15 more - school meals, rent, council tax – your milk tokens would stop and just loads of little niggly things, just couldn't do it any more

Natalie initially returned to part time work during the day while her father cared for her son. However, her father began to find this difficult and Natalie could not find anyone else to look after her son during the day, so she changed to evening work when her partner was available. When her partner moved out, Natalie could not find anyone to provide childcare so she left her job. Gail had a similar experience, after maternity leave she had planned to return part time to her retail job,

> Gail: well I was on maternity leave, but then I was still on maternity leave when her dad left, so I couldn't really have gone back because I moved over this end of town – it's quite far away and I didn't really feel like leaving a five month old baby all day, because its long hours in a shop, isn't it?

When her partner left, this meant that Gail had sole care of their child, making her return to paid work difficult. His leaving also meant she had to give up their privately rented flat and seek housing from the council. The administration of the housing system meant she was rehoused across the city, away from her previous job,

> Gail: ...the thing is you don't get no say - you just get like a pick of a band of all the areas. If I wanted to live like near my parents... on the bottom [of that band] is Easton, St Paul's, Montpellier, that sort of thing and you know you're sort of going

> to end up – you just get put there, don't you? So I thought at least if I pick the other, Hartcliffe is a better place to live and has got more things for children on offer

Zoe returned to paid work after the birth of her son, aged five at the time of the interview. However she found getting childcare difficult so left paid work, subsequently suffering health problems, which have prevented her return.

Laura is the last of the returners. She hadn't been in paid work for ten years before the birth of her child. Having a child eased the medical condition that had prevented this and at the time of the interview she had been working as a carer for over a year, before leaving due to a dispute over wages. Laura's employment in shift work was supported by a complex arrangement of care for her daughter, which involved Laura's parents, her aunt, a friend, her ex-partner and a childminder.

Social networks and entry to paid work

An interesting finding from the interview data was the importance of family contacts, and in one case a friendship, to a number of interviewees who had experience of paid work. Five interviewees reported this, four of whom were insiders in the area. Tina and Yvonne, the women who had entered paid work once pregnant, had both benefited in this way. The girlfriend of Tina's brother had given her an application form for a job at the company she was working for and Tina got an administrative role there. Yvonne had also worked in administration and got a job in a workplace where her uncle was a manager. Before having children, Sharon had worked in a service industry job, where her aunt was a supervisor. Melissa had a large extended family and most of her relatives lived in the area, she had previously worked in a factory where her aunt was a supervisor and planned to return to this job in the future; at the time of the interview she was working one shift a week in a shop managed by a relative. Isabelle was the only outsider who talked about her social networks leading her into paid work. She had become good friends with the landlady of a pub and was hoping to begin working a few shifts a week there.

Conclusion

As noted above, only one of the lone mothers interviewed was at the time engaged in paid work. This may be a consequence of how the interviewees was recruited, largely via nursery and early years centres which operated during the day when employed lone mothers may have been at work. The eligibility criteria for interviewees did not mention paid work, and only stipulated that the self-defined lone mothers should be living on the estate and have a child aged six or under. Although 19 out of the 20 lone mothers were currently not engaged in paid work, all of them expressed a desire to enter or re-enter paid work at some point in the future. This chapter has summarised the experiences of paid work of the interviewees before and after they became lone mothers, and briefly considered the role of social networks in access to paid work. This chapter supplies the background information for the following chapters where issues around combining paid work and lone motherhood are considered in more detail. In the next chapter I consider lone mothers' understandings of paid work in terms of their experiences and perceptions of the financial implications of being in employment.

Chapter six

Lone mothers: financially better off in paid work?

In chapter three the promotion of paid work in the New Deal for Lone Parents was analysed and it was suggested that here paid work is said to have three main benefits. These benefits are the increase in personal and family finances it provides when compared with income support, the personal moral improvement paid work imparts to the lone mother and transmits via her to her children in the form of the (paid) work ethic, and the greater social inclusion it brings. In chapters six and seven I consider whether the benefits of paid work as constructed in policy are echoed in the understandings of lone mothers. All but one of the lone mothers had some experience of paid work and eight had engaged in paid work after the birth of their child(ren). Thus some of the views about combining paid work and motherhood are based on past experiences, while some views reflect the expectations and perceptions of the impact of combining paid work and motherhood. In this chapter, lone mothers' views of whether paid work will bring greater financial rewards than income support are considered.

Government ministers have been keen to spread the message that paid work increases the income of lone mothers in comparison to the level of income support. As noted in chapter three, Harriet Harman claimed that paid work offered a "better standard of living [than income support]" (DSS 1997*d*). In a magazine aimed at women, Alistair Darling appealed to lone mothers by saying that full time workers "are guaranteed an income of over £200 a week – a lot more than you'd get on benefit" (Darling 2000). This emphasis on the financial benefits of paid work are also used in the NDLP personal adviser-client interaction; part of the personal adviser role is to perform 'better off calculations' to determine the rise in income to be gained from entry into paid work. Duncan and Edwards (1999) and Barlow and Duncan (2000) are critical of this approach. They argue that lone mothers do not respond to policy as 'rational economic women', driven solely by financial inducements, but formulate their relationship with the labour market with reference to their own values, derived from locally

based discourses on how paid work and motherhood should be appropriately combined (see chapter one).

In my study, some lone mothers challenged these claims that paid work would mean a rise in their income. It also appeared that the findings of Duncan and Edwards were partly challenged, as some interviewees expressed the opinion that if the financial rewards of paid work were greater, then they would enter the labour market. Below I consider if this means these lone mothers were claiming to act as rational economic women or whether their views were more complex. The overall aim of chapters six and seven (where the moral improving and socially including affects of paid work are considered) is to show that lone mothers have a more sophisticated understanding of paid work than New Labour policy and rhetoric allows. This chapter demonstrates that for many of my interviewees, this is even the case in terms of the basic New Labour claim that paid work means a greater income than benefits. I also consider the difficulties the lone mothers anticipated having with employers, childcare and negotiating the school holidays.

Income support, paid work and money

The financial benefits of paid work

In this section I consider the ways the interviewees talked about money, income support and paid work and the impact paid work would have on their finances, from their past experiences or thoughts about the future. During the interview with Beth, she was keen to emphasise that she had always been in paid work:

> Beth: Because it weren't until I had Andrew... even though with all my redundancies, I've never signed on – I've always worked
>
> Beth: I've worked all my life, if it weren't for a little bump I'd still be there – at my desk with my computer

Beth has joined the NDLP and recounts the story of the "better off" calculation her personal adviser performed when she received a job offer,

Beth: I was offered a job and Jane [my PA] reckoned out how much money [I would get] and by the time I had paid everything and got to the job I was £4 a week better off, but you're not better off in one respect because you've lost all those hours you're working
EH: Did she make a comment about that only being £4 more or…?
Beth: Well they only work it out without taking into account school dinners and the bus fare so it looked to her like you're £20 a week better off, but when you've like paid for school dinners and you've got to pay for your dinner when you're working – because this job was two full days a week, which was still part time, but was done over the two days so you'd have to take a dinner in or buy a dinner so… It's surprising how little bits soon mount up so you're no better off

Other interviewees reflected Beth's point that, "It's surprising how little bits soon mount up so you're no better off". Joanne stressed the costs of travelling to and from work,

> Joanne: most places you can't get a return before nine o'clock, right, so you are paying single fare there and single fare home, next day you have to do it again. I'm not being funny, even from here to Bedminster, you are paying £1.30, you know what I mean? It's impossible, you need at least 15 to 20 quid a week bus fare - they tell you to get a pass, I'm not being funny – have you got time to run around and find a bus pass? You haven't, and then it just doesn't work out

Elaine voiced similar concerns,

> EH: do you feel any pressure to get paid work?
> Elaine: no, well I mean I wouldn't be pressurised into it anyway because I have already done it [returned to work] and I've found that it didn't work, you know bus fares, then you've got to pay part of your childminding as well, its not all paid - you know, things like that[13]

Interviewees linked in-work costs with bringing down the overall financial gains of paid work over income support, so that entering paid work was not worth the extra labour it would entail. Melissa had attempted to continue in paid work after separating from her husband by moving onto WFTC. However problems with her tax credits and the extra costs of paid work meant she cut down her hours to earn the maximum amount allowed while receiving full income support, £20, this was more than when she received WFTC,

> Melissa: I ended up having more rent [to pay], it was just a total nightmare, a total nightmare, and to be honest I was earning £15 more - school meals, rent, council tax, your milk tokens would stop and just loads of little niggly things, I just couldn't do it [being on WFTC] any more.

[13] WTC includes an award to cover 70% of eligible childcare costs

When Kate was living with her partner, she was offered a job but could not take it as her relationship had began to break down and she felt she couldn't always rely on family members to provide childcare. However, she cast doubt on whether it would now be worth entering paid work,

> Kate: I don't think, to be honest, it would be worth going to work, because I haven't got to pay my rent, council tax – everything you've got to pay [when in paid work] I don't reckon it'd be worth it, I think you're about £10 better off
> EH: so you don't think it would be worth going back to work?
> Kate: no, not with the thought of childcare, rent, council tax – it would just not be worth it in my eyes

Like Beth, Rebecca, aged 17, had sought advice on her financial position if she moved from income support to paid work,

> Rebecca: well if I ever get a job, I've worked it out – the benefits adviser worked it out – and I would be better off working 16 hours a week than working full time because of the childcare, because they will pay 70% of it, but it won't be worth it. Well because, it just wouldn't, it would be with this £75 he's [the father of her child] got to pay [CSA payment], it would be worth it then, to go to work for 16 hours a week and go through all that hassle and be even more tired, and have less time to do anything [but] I can't see the point in it, in just having an extra £20 or £30 a week
> EH: is that how much it would be?
> Rebecca: yeah, because I would have to, out of that I would get £127 WFTC, on an average of £70 wages, but then out of that you've got to pay your rent, and my rent is £45 a week. When I'm 18 and liable for council tax, that's £70 a month. I'd have to pay the 30% towards childcare so it seems not that much better off really, it's just more hassle – all that extra hassle for just like £20 a week

Claire left her administrator job after the birth of her son for two reasons, difficulties in finding childcare and financial issues,

> Claire: I was doing administration and finance and I was dealing with the payroll as well... it was a lot of responsibility for a low paid job, it was. So I didn't really want to go back, and knowing that I had to support a child on a £116 a week, because that was the basic and then I had travelling expenses on top of that, so I was only really earning about £100 for me and my son. I mean we were getting that more or less on benefits so there was no incentive for me to actually do it, because I was no better off for doing it

Elaine also draws on the idea of the absence of a financial incentive to enter paid work,

> Elaine: if you got £50 a week more then you'd think about going, well I probably would be out at work now, you know, but not for £5 or £10, that's £200 a month and

that's a big difference... but sort of like, they are not offering enough difference, the difference is not big enough
EH: to make up for all the -
Elaine: - stress that you'd have to go through, it would have to be worth it, there has got to be incentives and there are not enough incentives

The poor increase in income these women anticipate from paid work, reflects the limited hours they anticipate working and, for some, their past experiences of employment and the low paid nature of the jobs they expect to enter.[14] However these lone mothers cannot be seen entirely as 'rational economic women'. In chapter eight, I analyse the interviewees' timetables of when it will be appropriate for them to enter paid work, and often these timetables are based on the age of their child(ren). The accounts given above demonstrate an acknowledgement of the poor financial rewards to be had from paid work and the burden of in-work costs. School dinners, bus fares, and childcare mount up to form significant outgoings for those on low wages. These comments on the lack of financial incentives to enter paid work do not mean that benefit levels should be reduced so paid work becomes more financially rewarding. Income support is impoverishing for many of the interviewees and money is not the only factor which explains their lack of participation in paid work, as the data analysed in chapters seven and eight suggests.

More money from paid work?

The accounts of a few interviewees conflicted with the views discussed above that paid work might not lead to greater financial rewards than income support. Yvonne, Tina, Zoe, and Sharon all said explicitly, or implied, that paid work would raise their income,

Yvonne: like I said I wanted to work because I feels it's out of order, because I can't contribute to the family

EH: and why did you do the crèche course?
Tina: because I thought I could take him, look - I was so fed up, I still am now, being on income support and its not much money

Zoe: I want to get back to work, I want to get money coming in but it's just hard...

EH: do you think it would be good for your children if you were at work?

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[14] Lone mothers as a group have low levels of qualifications and limited experience of paid work, so this expectation of low paid work is realistic (Bryson et al 1997)

> Sharon: ...obviously I would be able to get them a lot more things that they can't have now, which means their Xmas and birthdays and stuff...

The limits of the rational economic woman approach are seen here once again, as although these interviewees concur with the New Labour claims that lone mothers are financially 'better off' in paid work, this is not enough to induce them into the labour market: Zoe is coping with mental health problems, Sharon has two children who have chronic illnesses and attend different schools, Tina and Yvonne both plan to work in childcare so their child can be with them in the workplace. These stories are explored in more detail in chapter eight.

Coping with income support and the unpredictability of income from paid work

Some interviewees talked about problems of debt and the struggles they faced to pay bills, and to buy food, clothes and other essentials while living on income support. Despite these difficulties, income support does provide a regular and certain income each week; some interviewees contrasted the predictability of income support with the potential (or previously experienced) problems with payment for paid work. The extra costs of moving from income support to paid work and the unpredictability of bills is an issue for Isabelle,

> Isabelle: because even what they are doing now with this [benefit run-on] for so many weeks you will still get your benefit, like to cover you for those couple of weeks and everything, you still aren't going to manage your blinkin' rent and council tax and all the rest of it. The council tax alone – just for living in a piddly two bedroomed flat, is nearly £700 quid and I am like where the hell are you supposed to pull £700 quid just for that, you got £50 a week, well mine has gone up to £55 now, just for the rent, then you've got the heating which is a yearly bill... so you get it every November and it is like 3, 4, 500 quid, then you've got to think about food and electric and everything else that there is, so it makes me wonder, would it really, in a sense, be better for me to be working? Whereas because all I'm going to be doing is worrying about bills all the time and I'm not going to get to enjoy my child either because I'm not going to get to see her hardly at all, you know

Although at other points in her interview Isabelle talks about the difficulties of managing on income support, paid work is not constructed as the answer to her financial problems, but as bringing a set of different concerns. These financial issues around the entry to paid work are a significant concern for lone mothers. Dean has proposed that the transition mothers make from "home to work" should

be conceptualised as a significant life transition, and the financial dimension explored here should be seen as an important aspect of this transition (2001: 276).

As discussed above, Joanne mentioned the costs of bus fares as a drawback of entering paid work. Earlier in her interview she talked about having to find money each week for the bus fare to go to the supermarket, and occasionally walking there if she didn't have enough money,

> Joanne: ...I have walked into Bedminster and home just because I knew I didn't have that much money to last me, and I got home and I whinged like mad because I have got marks all down my arms, from having the bags and my arms were killing and my neck and back, but nine times out of ten I get on the bus...

Joanne is usually able to make her weekly shopping trip by bus, but does the journey on foot when she's run out of money. She anticipates that finding the bus fare to travel to paid work would be more difficult; and she would probably not have the option of walking to her workplace. Moving from income support to paid work requires lone mothers to develop new coping strategies, and means the transition to paid work is more complex than the NDLP image of the process.[15]

The ideas in these interview accounts cast some doubt on the construction of paid work as the route to financial stability, found in the New Deal,

> "Paid work can raise the family income and make it easier for you to plan ahead with your finances and build a more secure future for yourself and your children" (New Deal 2000)

Additionally, problems with wages and tax credits experienced by a few of these women and the huge publicity around problems with the administration of Working Tax Credits (WTC) further undermines the claim that paid work offers the greatest stability and financial security. While these concerns over the financial rewards of paid work may be deeply felt, they may have another function, providing a way for lone mothers to justify their non-participation in the labour market and so maintain their own timetables of when it is appropriate to

[15] A welcome improvement to the NDLP has been the introduction of the discretionary fund, administered by personal advisers to help lone mothers with the initial costs of moving into work, such as buying new clothes.

enter paid work. As we've seen in the case of Beth, above, claims about the drawbacks of paid work, justify her non-participation in the labour market, while enabling her to voice a 'public' commitment to the paid work ethic.

In 2003 problems with the administration of WTC, were well publicised in the media. This occurred after my research interviews had taken place, but Melissa and Claire had already experienced problems with the system of tax credits. For Melissa problems were caused by poor administration and her own problems with filling in forms,

> EH: ...that is a good thing about seeing someone at a job centre, they are supposed to organise all your benefits for you. Did you find the people helpful?
> Melissa: not really no, they mucked it right up, I ended up having more rent [to pay], it was just a total nightmare...
> EH: and do you think – you said you didn't find WFTC very good, are there ways it could be made better?
> Melissa: yeah, faster and more support, I was waiting for so long – nearly sixteen weeks to get my money, for them to send the book through. And you fill out one, you know I'm not the best person to be filling out a form, whatever, but ahhh they sent it back about three times, "oh you haven't filled in this right, you haven't filled in this", and it drove me mad. And I phoned up, "like do you think you know when I will have a payment?" and they were like "no", at 13 weeks, it was just total crap

Claire was due to start a part time job the day after I interviewed her. However eligibility rules for housing and council tax benefit run-on, meant she would not qualify for these. The rules stipulate that there must be a six month gap in-between jobs to qualify again for these benefits, as Claire had worked on a short-term project in the last six months she would only be able to claim WFTC, this meant she had been cautious about returning to paid work,

> Claire: ...how could I take the job where I starting off on the wrong foot? Where I'm in debt straight away and that and I mean if they're not going to give me an extra couple of weeks to help me out with like food and basic bills as well, I don't want to end up starting a job being in loads of debt you know, it's just not fair is it really?

Fortunately for Claire, her personal adviser helped her by using the discretionary fund and Claire's employer agreed to give her an advance on her wages so Claire could look forward to her new job, although she acknowledged that other lone mothers might not be able to access the same kind of help,

> EH: so you're lucky that you managed to sort that out -
> Claire: yeah, because if not it would have been difficult, you know - lucky enough I did have a friend which offered as well if it came to the crunch, who would lend me the money, but I mean some single parents, they wouldn't have got that, or had a friend who could pay or... so that means their options, is how can I say? Limited. They wouldn't have been able to take the job you know, because the rent office and that aren't going to wait a month for you to pay your rent

At the time of Laura's interview, she had left paid work because of a dispute over wages. She had been employed in shift work, working two 12 hour shifts in a row and then having two days off. Laura eventually found this pattern of work difficult and it was making her unhappy, however she anticipated that it would be hard to change her hours because of the problems she anticipated with the WFTC system,

> Laura: until my family credit was due to be renewed I couldn't actually drop my hours because I would end up with a lot less money, and the family credit won't make up for it.[16] So basically I would be in a catch-22. I don't think the system works at all to be quite honest with you, I think it is a load of rubbish when it comes to family credit, like now having to just live on my family credit [because of the wage dispute], that when I went to the job centre for advice – if I could get them to sack me, my income support would be reinstated just like that

Laura's said the problems with her wages meant her employer had "inadvertently messed up" her childcare. This left her in the difficult position of trying to find a childminder in the summer holidays, when places were generally taken up by the older siblings of the childminders regular charges. This explanation was not well received by Laura's employers: "...trying to explain this to them, they weren't on the same planet as me".

Dealing with employers, school holidays and children's illnesses

Many of the lone mothers anticipated that their experience of employers would be more likely have parallels with Laura's experiences than encounters with sympathetic employers, such as Claire's. Gail, Beth and Elaine felt particularly strongly about this,

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[16] At the time of the interview WFTC awards were made on a six monthly basis. The system has now changed to Working Tax Credits and awards are made yearly.

Gail:...because I know it is quite hard with an employer to get a job and get suitable time off for school holidays, because I know a few people in situations – trying to get time off for school holidays and it's quite hard really, because they are not flexible and saying "yeah you can have all the school holidays off", they still want you to work and you're struggling to get childcare and stuff...

EH: Do you think employers look at lone parents differently? Does it make them more likely to employ them, or less likely or...
Beth: They're not all that sympathetic I've found. Like in interviews, in a few interviews, I asked what would happen if I had a phone call to say my child was ill during the day – I would go home to my child, and you can tell in the interview they're like "so you would just leave?" – I wouldn't just leave, I'd finish what I was doing, but sorry my child comes first... and in a male-dominated world – it still is concerning employment – they don't seem to understand that. They assume that grandparents don't do anything, but sorry, all my grandparents work

Elaine: ...if I was in business I wouldn't want somebody who was just going to run off you know, or there is the "oh sorry my child is sick" syndrome, you know I'm running a business I don't want someone in my business who is like that, and I don't blame them for – you know what I mean, passing somebody over, but it is just too - as I said it would be very, very different if you were in a really high paid job because you could pay other people to do bits for you... like I could drop my things off at a laundry or something, or get some woman down the road to do my ironing for a tenner a week or something, you know...

Other interviewees also focussed on potential problems that could occur at work if their child(ren) was ill. Helen commented "because what if one of them is not very well and then I take a day off and I get the sack for that reason?" A few women thought it would be harder for them to find paid work now they were a mother, then before they had children. Some women were planning work in formal childcare during the early years of their child(ren) lives, as here they anticipated problems with employers and finding childcare would be bypassed (this is examined in more detail in chapter ten).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered the views and experiences of the interviewees on the subject of paid work, personal finances and other potential drawbacks of combining the roles of lone mother and employee. In terms of the NDLP, the relationship between paid work, income support and money is a simple one - being in paid work means that you are 'better off'. A number of my interviewees challenged this idea, by noting the financial costs of making the transition to paid work, the extra burdens of in-work costs and the unpredictability of an income from paid work and tax credits, when compared to income support. I also

considered a number of other issues around difficulties with paid work, namely relationships with employers, dealing with school holidays and children's illnesses and finding childcare. While the interviewees valued paid work and a few did anticipate that they would be financially "better off" in paid work, employment does not currently fit into their lives and the caring activities they are engaged in. Paid work is presented by some interviewees as consuming time and energy and as creating new stresses, which would not be adequately offset by the poor financial rewards of employment. In the next chapter the lone mothers' views of paid work are considered in more depth as the focus turns to the second and third aspects of the promotion of paid work in the NDLP, its role in moral improvement and social inclusion.

Chapter seven

Paid work, personal moral improvement, social inclusion, housework and care

In the previous chapter, the focus was the perceived financial consequences of entering paid work for the interviewees. However, it might be that for some interviewees this discussion misses the point of participation in paid work. For these women paid work was seen as a superior form of income to income support, regardless of whether it would give them a rise in their income or not. These views connect with the second theme identified in the promotion of paid work in the NDLP (see chapter three), the idea that paid work signals a personal moral improvement for the lone mother in question and that this acts through her to elevate the moral status of her household and her child(ren). New Labour have presented the paid worker as providing a valuable role model in the home, giving children better prospects and an all-round better way of life - these ideas are perhaps best summed up in the following quote from Harriet Harman,

> "...work is not just about earning a living. It is a way of life... [w]ork helps us to fulfil our aspirations - it is the key to independence, self-respect and opportunities for advancement" (DSS 1997*d*)

Particularly around the time of the launch of the NDLP, ministers emphasised that paid work was something lone mothers wanted, but faced too many obstacles to attain - obstacles which the NDLP would, of course, break down. The accounts of a number of the interviewees reflected the 'personal moral improvement' language found in the promotion of the NDLP, even though all the interviewees (with the exception of Melissa) were not involved in paid work. In this chapter, I begin by showing that the lone mothers drew on the notion of personal moral improvement in paid work, even though they were in the 'inferior' position of being income support recipients. As the paid work ethic appears to be held in high esteem by some, I turn to the lone mothers' understandings of domestic labour and caring in their lives to see how the activities they prioritise over paid work are conceptualised - do lone mothers consider what they are doing to be

work or to be valuable? The domestic labour debate drew attention to the necessity of childcare and housework; work from the ethic of care perspective demands that caring should be more highly valued by society and studies of housework by Oakley (1976) and Gavron (1966) drew attention to the oppressive and negatives aspects of the housewife role. I consider the lone mothers' understandings of housework and care and assess if they are valued as highly as in the feminist literature and how housework and lone motherhood are experienced. In the last part of the chapter I consider the interviewees' perceptions of the third theme of the promotion of paid work in the NDLP, the socially including effects of paid work and begin to look at the social networks of lone mothers (a subject taken up again in chapter nine) and the range of caring relationships and activities that they are involved in. The chapter ends by looking at the lone mothers' views of the compulsory work-focussed interview for lone parents.

Personal moral improvement and the positive impact of paid work

Some of the interview accounts reflected the first part of the 'moral improvement' that the NDLP promotes, that to be in paid work is to be in receipt of a superior form of income to income support. Also here is the idea that paid work enhances your moral identity and improves your quality of life. Melissa and Laura both talked about the benefits of paid work in terms of the routine it would give to their lives,

> EH: you said because you are sociable, are there any other reasons why you want to go into work?
> Melissa: I'd have to get a job from ten to two [o'clock], because I've got horses at nine o'clock to muck out, go straight to work, come back, pick the children up, be out in the field again. There's no way I could be at home, I'd be lost, no way
> EH: so you want that routine?
> Melissa: I likes routine, yeah

> EH: is it important to you to have a job?
> Laura: I do prefer to be at work, yes
> EH: why's that?
> Laura: its like a daily routine; it keeps me sane, rather than taking her to school, coming back, doing my housework and just sitting here, I feel I am actually getting out and doing something, achieving something

Other women also talked about paid work in terms of it improving their lives, here the idea was expressed that in paid work they would 'feel better' in some way,

> Fiona: ...if you don't do anything and you just look after a kid all day you tend to lose your self-esteem and confidence. You need to get out there in the world and do something, or you end up brain dead, don't you? If you don't use your brain very much, doing the same things all the time it drives you mad, that's what I reckon anyway

Claire, Paula and Rebecca talked about paid work in terms of the positive ways it would enhance their lives,

> EH: ...but you haven't felt pressure that you had to get a job, it's been because you wanted to?
> Claire: I just feel as if *I need something for myself* as well, and you know, I didn't want to be on benefits for the rest of my life
>
> EH: ... would there be any good things, or negatives [about entering paid work]?
> Paula: ...I'm not sure, obviously for him, he'd be in with other kids, doing his own thing, he'd be more independent, *I'd be more independent in myself*
>
> EH: and what do you think you would get out of work, just the money then?
> Rebecca: yeah
> EH: you don't want to go for other reasons?
> Rebecca: I suppose it would be a break from him [her son], *something different, to get me motivated*

In these accounts, being 'at home' and not in paid work is constructed as doing something for your child(ren) but not for yourself. These women are reflecting a loss of personal identity, as they have become mothers. Their words also reflect the low social value placed on motherhood and, as in New Labour rhetoric, the supposed supremacy of paid work. Some women expressed the view that income support is an inferior form of income, as it is not received in exchange for labour performed in the formal labour market. An idea pervading some of these accounts was that to be outside of the labour market was an illegitimate choice for certain mothers who should be able to be in paid work,

> Yvonne: I mean there are the odd parents that would rather spend the day looking after their kids, sitting on their bum not doing anything, claiming social money... but the majority would prefer to get out a lot more, and do a bit of work. I don't know, because myself, I feel better earning a wage, knowing that I am not having everybody else's tax money, I'm earning my own wage, I'm earning my own money, paying my own tax, paying my own national insurance and all that, because I feels like a bum claiming social money
>
> Melissa: ...I hate being on income support, I hate it, it's crap, £97 a week I get for me and two children and it's just, how do they expect you to live on it? I think people who have got so many kids and they are all at school and they're just bumming around all day doing housework, I don't think it is fair, I really don't, they

should be out to work. They should be thinking, "I want more for my children, we wants a better life, so I'll go out and earn my money" and that's how it should be

Tina: I know people, their kids are at school and they still haven't got jobs because I see them everyday when they are at the shops. It's just they don't want to get jobs and obviously that's why they have had kids... to not get a job, to just be sat at home and just be on income support, really there is no need for it

Donna also expresses similar ideas and along with Kate, talks about paid work in positive terms for herself,

Donna: it's like the population that live [here]... they're all on the dole. Even if I end up being 50, because I got kids it's hard for me to work at the moment, I'm not going to be on the dole all my life, even if I have to wait another couple more years, I'm still going to end up doing something

EH: would there be any positive things if you went back to work, any good things?
Kate: for me to mix with different people and have a social life and have money for me. Oh and earning, do you know what I mean? It would just be nice for me say, "I went to work, and that was my first wage packet, that is an achievement"

Moral improvement and children

Beth and Claire continue the themes of moral superiority of paid working and the importance of earning your own money. In the following extracts the personal moral improvement that paid work brings are linked with the perceived positive consequences for children of having a mother in paid work,

Beth: I want to work because I don't want my son to be brought up thinking that you get things in life for nothing and all that, you've got to work for what you got and also because I'd like to earn my own money. It weren't until I had [her son]... even though with all my redundancies, I've never signed on, I've always worked

Beth: I'd do anything, I'd become a manager, I'd be a cleaner. I don't care, to me its dignity that I'm earning my own money and my son's brought up not to think that you get everything for doing nothing in life...

For New Labour, a key category of concern are 'workless households'. Particular concern is expressed for the children of these 'workless households'. This is seen in the promotion of the NDLP where employed lone mothers are applauded for being positive role models, living out the paid work ethic and this is also linked to concerns about child poverty. Above, Beth addressed the effects she hopes her employment will have on her child. This attitude is also expressed by Claire, whose concerns are explicitly linked with raising a son,

Claire: well I'm hoping in some ways that by working and things like that, to me it shows an example, doesn't it? If he [her son] sees his parent working and that, at the end of the day, it might give him the inspiration – "oh well my mum's done this, I can go and do that as well". So I'm hoping he will go on to further education and hopefully, you know, he'll get himself in a trade of some sort, you know – get like a good qualification, get a good job out of it. That's what I'm hoping because I know it's more difficult for boys than what it is for girls to get a job in this day and age

New Labour's 'obstacles' and lone mothers

Although other mothers anticipated positive consequences for their children if they entered paid work, Claire and Beth were the only interviewees to talk about being a positive role model for their child in this way. The theme of individual or personal moral improvement from paid work was drawn on more frequently. However, as with the echoing of the belief that paid work will deliver more income than benefits, the next step to paid work is not made by the interviewees who use this theme, as they are not in agreement with New Labour's logic that certain 'obstacles' are the only factors preventing them from entering paid work. For New Labour, these obstacles include the perception of the loss of income in the transition from income support to paid work. This is supposedly solved by the introduction of tax credits and various 'passported' benefits; however as we have seen not all the lone mothers in this study were convinced that employment would raise their income, or they felt the rise would be so small that entering paid work would "not be worth it". For New Labour the biggest obstacle to lone mothers employment has consistently been constructed as the care of children. In 1997 the National Childcare Strategy was launched to increase the number of childcare places. In a NDLP television advertising campaign aired on ITV in October 2003, childcare is again presented as the most important obstacle preventing lone mothers from entering paid work and as an issue that NDLP personal advisers can resolve. In the advertisement a women (the lone mother), walks down a road but is confronted with roadworks in her path. The workman tells her "there's an obstruction across the road"; the area is cordoned off with tape labelled 'childcare'. After meeting with a personal adviser the tape (the childcare 'obstacle') falls away and the journey (to paid work, the audience assumes) can be continued.

To some extent the New Labour approach to childcare as an obstacle is well conceived; lone mothers need someone to look after their child(ren) when they are in employment and they need access to information on the availability of childcare. Claire decided not to return to her job after the birth of her son because it was low paid and because "there were childcare issues and that, because I didn't know of anywhere at that time where I could get childcare help and everything". Similarly, Natalie left paid work when her relationship with her partner ended and it was difficult to find a family member to look after her son. There are a number of problems with this view of childcare as an 'obstacle' that can be overcome, however, which mean the New Labour view does not fit with the views, or lives, of the lone mothers represented here. Additionally, while there has been an expansion in childcare places, since the National Childcare Strategy was launched, the number of places does not meet demand. As the evidence from this study shows, the availability of childcare places and access to information does not necessarily translate into services being used by mothers. Opinions of different sources of childcare are shaped by experiences and perceptions of what form of care is right for a particular child. A good example of this is Natalie's views of childminders and after-school clubs,

> EH: would you ever think of having a childminder?
> Natalie: no, not unless I knew them
> EH: what about after school clubs, what do you think about them?
> Natalie: I don't know because I don't know what school he would be going to so -
> EH: so it would depend on the area he was in?
> Natalie: yeah and who his friends were

A few women did anticipate using formal childcare when they entered paid work, but most of the interviewees did not think this would be necessary. As chapter eight will discuss, a high value was placed on 'being there' to drop off and pick up children from school, so a number of interviewees wanted paid work that would fit in with school hours. Although Beth expressed strong views in keeping with the personal moral improvement theme, she also anticipated problems combining paid work and lone motherhood. Beth wanted paid work that would fit in with her role as a mother and commented, "they should do more jobs where you can work for a few hours during school time". She raises an interesting point,

turning the 'obstacles' approach on its head by suggesting that the labour market should be adjusted to meet the needs or desires of mothers, rather than mothers overcoming 'obstacles' to meet the demands of employers. A number of factors seem to reconcile the potential tension for lone mothers who place a high value on being in paid work, even though this is not their current situation. For example, Beth is pragmatic about the extra financial costs of paid work and the difficulties she would face as a lone mother in the labour market so she constructs this period of not being in paid work as a temporary blip in an adult lifetime of high commitment to paid work. Her state of paid worklessness is part of her being a 'good mother' and she finds it difficult to identify an age her son would have to reach before paid work would become appropriate because "he's a very mummy orientated [child]".

Care and domestic labour

Valuing care and domestic labour: 'the hardest job in the world'?

I have argued that the NDLP privileges paid work over the caring and mothering activities that lone mothers do and have considered the views my interviewees held on the supposed personal moral improvement to be had from engagement in paid work. A number of the interviewees did place a high value on paid work, with some constructing it as a route to a better life than can be had when in receipt of income support. This valuing of paid work was interesting in the context of the lack of engagement in employment of mothers in my study and so I wanted to look at how the mothering, caring and housework they engage in was experienced and understood or valued. Part of the interview schedule focussed on attitudes to motherhood and housework, and interviewees were asked if they considered housework and mothering to be a job, regarded these activities as 'work', or thought about them in some other way. Some of the interviewees said this was a difficult question to answer. In this section I analyse the accounts given on these issues and show how some of the contradictions and difficulties around theorising domestic labour, mothering and care emerged.

For Tina, Melissa and Yvonne housework and caring is simply part of life,

> EH: and do you think of things like bringing him up [her son] and the housework as a job… or how do you think of it?
> Tina: no, I don't think of it as a job – its just sort of my life I suppose, its just what I do
>
> EH: and do you think things like housework and looking after children should be seen as a job, or a bit different?
> Melissa: I don't know, it's just an everyday thing in my life, so I don't know, it's got to be done
>
> EH: do you think of your housework and bringing up [her son] as a job or not?
> Yvonne: I just think of it as part of my life, day by day, not part of a job, I don't see it as a chore or anything. I just sees it as part of my life, something I've chosen to do. I mean with housework you've got a choice haven't you? "I don't want to do the housework today, so I'm not going to bother", with him I can't say "oh, I aren't bothering feeding him today, I'm not going to play with him either, I can't be bothered". Its not a chore, its more of day to day life, you choose to have a baby, that baby depends on you, you know, it isn't a job, its more of like getting on with your life and you have someone else to look after

Here both Melissa and Yvonne refer to the necessity of the caring activities they do, to reject the idea of this being 'work'. Paula and Donna find it more difficult to comment on whether or not caring should be seen as 'work', Paula remarks "yes and no", Donna comments "well I don't know… it is quite a hard [question] that one",

> EH: what about looking after children and housework, do you think that should be seen as a job - do you think of it as your job or how do you think of it?
> Paula: yes and no, because I mean my friend, her boyfriend, he turns round to her and says "you've got it easy, I goes to work, I dos this, I dos that". We got kids! They are not easy, so I don't know
>
> EH: and do you think looking after kids and things should be seen as a job?
> Donna: well I don't know, I shouldn't get paid to look after my own kids because that would be mean, to have money to look after them. You should look after your kids anyway or you shouldn't have them, but I think they should just put the child benefit and income support up… I just think they should look after you money-wise, which really they shouldn't in a way - because I could look down on that because you're the one who had the child anyway, so it is quite a hard one that one

Other women were more certain that there was something about housework and caring that meant it should be seen as work, or at least be more highly rewarded and valued. Like Donna, Fiona, Isabelle and Kate emphasise that looking after children is 'hard',

> EH: and do you think looking after children and doing the housework should be seen

as a job?
Fiona: yeah, yeah, because its really hard

EH: do you think doing things like the housework and looking after the children should be seen as a job?
Isabelle: yeah I do, at the end of the day the hardest job in the world is bringing up a child you know, and look at what piddly wages you get given for it. If you class your benefit as wages you are getting for the job of being a parent, you know, lorry drivers get paid twice as much as lone parents do... its ridiculous, it's not valued enough

EH: do you think doing things like the housework and looking after the children should be seen as a job?
Kate: I think it is a hard job because there's no finish time and there's no starting time – its constant and no one's turning round and saying "oh well done", do you know what I mean, for getting through the week. And like I said there isn't any socialising, there's just the kids and that's what I do find hard

Like Kate, Joanne also explains that the conditions of 'work' for mothers mean that it is actually a more difficult job than work in the formal labour market,

Joanne: ...if someone looked up and said to me you've got to get a job, I'd say, "I have one, I have a full time job looking after my kids... thank you very much"... [when you are in a paid job] you have that space in the period of the day when you're doing your work, you have a break in work, then you have your dinner hour, then you do your work, then you go home. Well, when you go home, that's your job done, our job is never done, you know what I mean – it is a constant everyday thing that you have got to do, you can't ring up sick – you know what I mean, we don't get no holidays and stuff like that, or your bank holiday Monday, you get your day off work, we don't get none of those things, you know what I mean?

Kate and Joanne's experiences of housework and caring as constant and unending take us back to Oakley's (1976) analysis of housework and also stress the necessity and unchanging nature of some of these activities. Elaine's view of housework and caring is similar, and here she outlines the multiple roles that have to be fulfilled, after initially hesitating about how to answer this question,

EH: and do you see housework and stuff as a job, bringing up children as a job?
Elaine: I think you should get - I think if people you know - I think if the government actually want to – but this is another argument isn't it, they should value... what women do more. Because a women on her own is a lot of things, she's a painter, she's a decorator, she's a carpenter... she juggles financial things and she does all the... messy jobs like housework, clearing up sick, making the food. I mean there is a lot of roles there and of course like, you are a manager really, because you are managing your own house, so to do that successfully, you have to be able to think as well

Beth's views are slightly different as she makes a distinction between more and less deserving mothers,

EH: Some people would say that doing things like looking after the children and doing the housework should be seen as a job -
Beth: It is a job... but it's just when you get these teenage mums who've got a few children and they've never worked and get the state to totally support them, that's what gets me

'Twice as much work': combining motherhood and paid work

In the previous section I consider the ways in which the interviewees constructed housework and caring for children as a job, 'work' or something else. Some of the women did express the view that these activities should be seen as work, while others emphasised the way that being a mother and the related activities this entails, are 'part of life', bound up with the 'choice' they had made to have children and the necessity of looking after them. However, an idea of housework and caring for children as labour emerges more strongly when the accounts given about the anticipated or experienced drawbacks of combining paid work and motherhood are considered.

Paula's comments, above, have already hinted at the way the difficulties of caring for children are 'hidden', she is critical of her friend's boyfriend who says they have "got it easy", in comparison to his life in the world of paid work. We've also seen that a number of women talk about their lives being 'hard'. Elaine has experienced the difficulties of combining the roles and labour of employee and mother, which she vividly describes,

EH: so you went to work when you had one [child] and before the next one was born?
Elaine: well... I wasn't going to go back to work after her [first child] but then I thought "oh no, I can't manage on this" [income support]... so then I went back to work and... and then I found it does not work... you are worse off really...
EH: in what ways are you worse off?
Elaine: well everything really, number one you've got a baby or a child – they are very very tiring, especially you know, it's not like you can say "right my child will go to bed at such and such a time... and the next day I am going to get up and"... because that child might be sick, they may have a disturbed night... and then you have to go to work tired and you come home and think "oh yeah, I'll get the housework done and things" and you don't do it because you are so tired... then there is frustration with the child as well, you know, "come on get up"... you have got to get to the childminders for a certain time... and pushchairs and transport and what if the bus doesn't come?... There are just so many stresses on top of the stresses of having a child... unless you were in really high paid job... [then] I would pay for somebody else to maybe clean my house once a week... maybe I would have the childminder for another two hours so I could come home and prepare a meal or something, so you know that is what money would give me. Now without

> money I am just giving myself twice as much work for less money and that doesn't make sense to me

For Elaine, the tiredness, stress, frustration and doubled workload mean combining low paid work and motherhood "doesn't make sense". This view of paid work is based on Elaine's previous experiences and in detail she demonstrates the impact on daily life of engaging in paid work when a lone mother of two young children. She talks about the unpredictability of children, whose illnesses and sleepless nights can't be planned for, and the tiredness of working a day 'shift' in paid work, followed by an evening and night 'shift' of housework and childcare. This description of the practical reality of mixing paid work and lone motherhood is very different to the image of paid work promoted in the NDLP; here paid work is about achievement, fulfilment and confidence, not unending labour, stress and tiredness.

Helen and Joanne also anticipate the drawbacks of paid work,

> Helen: ...but obviously you got to make sure its worth your while, because obviously its not worth me going to work, struggling with housework and keeping all the washing together and looking after my children if I'm going to be getting less money, I'd rather stay at home and look after my children and get everything like the washing, the ironing, the housework [done] - I don't want to come home to a dirty house everyday and have no food in the cupboards where I haven't been shopping

> EH: do you think lone mums should have to go out to work?
> Joanne: ...if there was a decent paid job and I had enough money to cover everything and still have that little bit of money that I have worked my behind off all week for... then yeah, I would love to go out to work. I would love to go out and work... but it doesn't pay... I'd finish work at five and walk through the door at six, half six, my kids, fair to say they are up a bit later than most other kids, but everything you space out during the day, like housework, cooking, bathing your kids – you've got to do all that in the space of a couple of hours... finding time to play with my kids and only earning three or four pounds at the end of it, that isn't worth my time, do you know what I mean?

In these two extracts, paid work is again seen as taking something away from the lives of the women in question, in contrast to the positive construction of paid work in the NDLP, where it is always presented in additive terms. Here paid work is seen as consuming time, meaning that the 'work' of raising children, has to be compressed into a few hours at the end of the day. Like Rebecca, below, these concerns are also linked to the poor financial returns anticipated from paid

work,

> Rebecca: well if I ever get a job, I've worked it out – the benefits adviser worked it out – and I would be better off working 16 hours a week than working full time because of the childcare, because they will pay 70% of it, but it won't be worth it. Well because, it just wouldn't, it would be with this £75 he's [the father of her child] got to pay [CSA payment], it would be worth it then, to go to work for 16 hours a week and *go through all that hassle and be even more tired, and have less time to do anything* [but] I can't see the point in it, in just having an extra £20 or £30 a week

Here housework and caring for children are not constructed as labour but specifically in terms of the time and energy these tasks demand. It is time and energy these women will lose when they think about combining paid work and motherhood. In Laura's account there is a sense of the finiteness of energy and time and the other practical difficulties of being a lone mother and an employee. For Laura, these problems were particularly pronounced when she was in paid work doing long shifts in a residential home for the elderly. Laura describes the negative impact of work on both herself and her daughter,

> Laura: ...on my days off, I was so shattered as well, after doing the 12 hour shift. The first day was catch up on the housework and if I had the energy before she come home from school to go out and do the shopping, which 90 per cent of the time, that didn't happen. And the following day I went out and done the shopping, when she was at school, so I really didn't have the time [to be a classroom helper, as her daughter had asked her], unless I would have put off the shopping and went into school with her, but then I would have had to drag her round a supermarket and she would have been tired and grumpy

In this section the problems of combining paid work and the work that lone motherhood entails have been discussed. It is interesting that the time and energy that caring for children demands emerges more clearly when talked about in the context of paid work than when discussed in isolation. In part, this might be a reflection of a declining public discourse or consciousness of motherhood and the 'housewife' role as legitimate in excusing women from the labour market. It also seems to reflect the contradictory experiences of being a lone mother 'at home', which at times feels like 'doing nothing', lonely and boring, but is also a role that demands caring for a child 24 hours a day and doing housework. These themes are discussed in more detail below.

Being 'at home' and 'doing nothing'

A number of the women anticipated that combining paid work and lone motherhood would be difficult, but this didn't mean that being at home was experienced in an entirely positive way. A dominant perception of motherhood and the 'housewife' role is that women are 'doing nothing'. Again we can return to Paula's words,

> Paula: ...I mean my friend, her boyfriend, he turns round to her and says "you've got it easy, I goes to work, I dos this, I dos that". We got kids! They are not easy...

Here paid work is constructed in opposition to looking after children; paid work is activity "I dos this, I dos that", motherhood inactivity "you've got it easy". We have already seen that some women describe their lives as 'hard' and talk about the difficulties of motherhood. However, at the same time, running through the interviews there is an idea that 'being at home' is to be 'doing nothing', and this is experienced as 'boring' or 'lonely' by some women.

When she is not in paid work, Laura describes her everyday life as,

> Laura: ...taking her to school, coming back, doing my housework and *just sitting here*...

The views of Yvonne, Melissa and Tina have already been discussed above,

> Yvonne: I mean there are the odd parents that would rather spend the day looking after their kids, *sitting on their bum not doing anything*, claiming social money for sitting on your bum and not doing nothing...
>
> Melissa: ...I think people who have got so many kids and they are all at school and they're *just bumming around all day* doing housework, I don't think it is fair...
>
> Tina: I know people, their kids are at school and they still haven't got jobs...to not get a job, to just be sat at home and just on income support, really there is no need for it.

Claire said,

> Claire: ...you should be able to go and get at least a part-time job when they first start school, because I'm the type of person, I get bored and that. I mean *you can only do so much blooming cleaning* and that...

Like Beth, who earlier in this chapter made a distinction between older and younger mothers, in these extracts not being in paid work is constructed as legitimate for certain mothers, those with children aged under five, but not appropriate for mothers once their children are in full time school. This fits in with the view that most of the women express, that they will enter paid work once their children are in nursery/school and so legitimates their position as lone mothers outside of the labour market.

Other mothers also mentioned the boredom and loneliness of motherhood. Zoe is the mother of a child at school full time school, but is unable to enter paid work due to health problems,

> EH: what was it like when he went to school for you, after being together all the time?
> Zoe: fine, I do get a bit bored but I just, I just carry on and do what I've got to do basically

Tina, the mother of a toddler, talks about the repetitiveness of her weekly routine, and comments that she is "bored already",

> EH: is there anything else you would get out of work do you think?
> Tina: I wouldn't want to be just sat at home not doing anything, like I'm bored already, although we go there three days a week [a group for mothers and their children], on the other days, like the Tuesdays and the Thursdays and the weekends, I wake up and think, "what are we going to today"? And it's just the same, week in and week out, you're doing the same stuff, so I think if I was to wait until he went to school I would be completely bored...

Fiona and Donna talked about feeling lonely,

> EH: so how is having children, is it more difficult or -
> Fiona: yeah, it's really hard
> EH: what is hard?
> Fiona: you gets really lonely
>
> Donna: [in] my last relationship I had a lot of hassle... and I don't want to go through that again so I'm just trying to sort me and my kids out and relax a bit now, its hard because it does get lonely

So far we have considered the different meanings and experiences of housework and childcare for lone mothers, in comparison to the promotion of paid work in the NDLP as 'morally improving'. The differing viewpoints of the interviewees

about how domestic labour and looking after children should be understood and are experienced, and their feelings about paid work encapsulate some of the main tensions in feminist theorising about paid work and caring activities. Putting the stories of the interviewees together reveals these tensions. Some women rejected the idea of housework and childcare being viewed as 'work' or a job and instead talked about these activities as being part of everyday life. Other interviewees said they did see these activities as 'a job' or as work. As we saw in the quotes from Joanne, Elaine and Isabelle some women thought that this caring 'work' should be more highly valued socially. All of the interviewees anticipated (re)entering paid work at some point in the future, and for some, including Beth and Claire, this desire for paid work was articulated in terms of the importance of living out the paid work ethic. Although all the interviewees wanted to be in paid work in the future, they were very aware of the difficulties they would face in combining paid work and motherhood. This included problems with fitting paid work into school hours, the increased total workload they would face, tiredness and lack of time. The interviewees were often very aware of the complexities of juggling domestic labour and paid work but still planned to do this, this is linked to the way they talked about 'being at home' and their experiences of caring for young children. A number of women talked about their lives being 'hard', and of the loneliness and boredom of being at home. Bauman's comments on the different experiences of time and space for those in and out of paid work are pertinent here. He argues that those in the world of work live in time, and space matters little; contrastingly the workless live in space, and in their time, 'nothing happens' (Brannen 2002: 11-12 and see Bauman 1998). Some of the mothers of pre-school emphasised their need to get out of their home and the difficulties of waking up knowing they had 'nothing to do'. For employees, space has less meaning as their working lives are subject to task with deadlines and time limits.

This isolation of motherhood isn't solely a product of the low social value placed on caring activities but an expression of the feelings of these women about being confined to the private sphere. These feelings of isolation are a comment on how the care of young children and domestic labour are socially organised and distributed and reflects the conditions of the lives of lone mothers living on

peripheral social housing estates, in receipt of income support. In chapter nine, I explain that 'outsiders' in the area particularly experience these feelings of isolation. At this point in the discussion we are left with a classic dilemma in feminist theorising of caring, how to value care more highly, without essentialising women as 'carers' and cutting them off from the formal labour market. For some women going to Sure Start groups or participating in training (see chapter ten) was an important intermediate stage between 'being at home' and entering paid work, and was sometimes successful for them in reducing feelings of social isolation.

Paid work and social inclusion

The third theme identified in the promotion of the NDLP was paid work as the route to social inclusion. In 1997 Harriet Harman talked about paid work as "provid[ing] access to social networks" (DSS 1997*d*). Darling (2000) mentioned the "support network" that paid work supposedly provides, along with the other benefits of entering paid work, "You have money in your hands, confidence and the support network that comes from knowing more people". As described above, some interviewees talked about the loneliness and boredom of being at home and some women did mention the potential benefits of paid work in 'socially including' terms. In the following extract, Kate talks about the three main ways in which work would be positive for her and there are striking similarities with the quote from Darling above. Kate mentions meeting new people, having money and the sense of achievement paid work would give her,

> EH: would there be any positive things if you went back to work, any good things for you?
> Kate: for me to mix with different people and have a social life and have money for me. And earning, do you know what I mean? It would just be nice for me say "I went to work, and that was my first wage packet, that is an achievement"

Kate's ideas about the benefits of paid work, contrast with her experiences of being at home with her children,

> Kate: ...and like I said there isn't any socialising [when at home], there's just the

kids and that's what I do find hard

Joanne and Donna also talk positively about paid work giving the opportunity to meet other adults,

> Joanne: ...I would rather do a nine to five job than be sat home looking after my kids, because you are socialising that way. I mean that is how you are going out and meeting other people, otherwise you are not meeting other people, you know what I mean?

> EH: would you like to go to work?
> Donna: yeah, it's nice because at home it's boring. I know I've got my kids but its nice to go out and meet people and meet different people, you can't do that at home...

In a similar way, Melissa talks about paid work as suiting her as she is a "sociable person",

> Melissa: ...I've always worked in factories and so on, it was good pay, it was a good laugh. I've never been out of work, I do like to work, I'm a very sociable person...

We can see here that a number of women concur with the NDLP conception of paid work as socially including. However, as with the earlier discussion of the women who reproduce the theme of paid work as morally improving and the women who agree that paid work will increase their income, to agree with abstract ideas about paid work is not the same as being near to entering the labour market. A good example here is Kate, in the extract above she is extremely positive about the benefits of paid work, however later in the interview she is sceptical about the financial benefits of paid work, "I don't reckon it'd be worth it, I think you're about £10 better off'. Also Kate wouldn't consider doing paid work until her children are older because of the developmental problems of her youngest child, "... he'd miss out [if she did paid work] because obviously he needs me, he wouldn't have my input". While the ideas in the promotion of paid work in the NDLP, may fit with the attitudes of some mothers, there remains a huge gap between these ideas and the practical realities of the everyday lives of these mothers and their children.

Social networks, social inclusion and unpaid work

Two of the interviewees mentioned the potential of paid work to be 'boring'

rather than the potential of paid work to bring social contacts. Paula talked more favourably about her employment in temporary agency work than her experiences of waitressing in this respect,

> EH: so was that retail work?
> Paula: well, it was in the restaurant, doing the waitress work and that. It was like "phew" - got a little bored at times. With agency work you are not always in the same place, you are dotted around, so it was nice because it weren't the same job over and over

Elaine talked about the boredom of some of the paid work that she had been involved in,

> Elaine: ...probably if I was in a highly paid job I would be in a job where I had to think, so I would be using my mind and I would be getting some sort of satisfaction from it. But if I'm going for a job that is going to fit round my family, invariably it is going to be a low paid job, yeah, a part time low paid job where I am going to be totally bored... and I'm just like what's the point? You know, I have been there and am talking from personal experience, I can't see the point in it all really

For Elaine, the lack of stimulation from the paid work available to her contrasts with her experiences of voluntary work,

> Elaine: ...because the thing is, it is probably a bit different for me because I am like heavily involved with Sure Start, you know, really Sure Start keeps me going in more than one way - it keeps me going on like a mental level

Here Elaine is describing the significance of the voluntary work that she does with Sure Start. The involvement of the local community and local parents is also important to Sure Start programmes as it is part of objective four, "strengthening families and communities". For Elaine, involvement in Sure Start is presented as crucial to her well-being – "[it] keeps me going in more than one way" and this is something she feels she couldn't get from the kind of paid work available to her.

When I asked Elaine about whether lone mothers in the area tended to do paid work, she made the point that if they did, she wouldn't know them,

> Elaine: I don't know any real single parent families that actually work... part time, which is maybe what you are thinking of. The ones that work full time, then I don't know them if they don't go to the playgroups and things, probably their children get taken by childminders...

Elaine's account indicates the difficulty of involvement in Sure Start for lone mothers in paid work. It also shows that the privileging of paid work as the route to social inclusion for lone mothers does not fit with certain aims of Sure Start and does not necessarily best serve lone mothers. This is indicative of a wider problem with New Labour thinking and the NDLP: the assumption that lone mothers are socially excluded and that paid work is the best route to social inclusion. Following the comments of Harman and Darling, above, social inclusion is about the "support network" and "social networks" that paid work supposedly provides. Although some interviewees did talk about feeling isolation and boredom 'at home', there was involvement in social and support networks, and the women were engaged in unpaid 'work' beyond the caring and domestic labour they did for themselves and their own children. The interviewees talked about being involved in a range of caring activities for members of their social and family networks. Donna, a mother of three children, talked about looking after a fourth child,

> Donna: well I usually look after my friend's daughter, because I'm a bit silly like that. [I] looks after my friend's kid as well and people say I've got to stop now, because it's too much

After the birth of her son, Beth returned to paid work, but left again to care for her grandmother who lived on the estate,

> Beth: He [her son] was four last year and my Nan went virtually totally blind so I went to look after her, do the cooking and all that

Claire, Laura and Sharon also provide care for older family members,

> Claire: I mean I've got my dad as well, my dad's good at times when he's well, because my dad's got a lot of illnesses himself to do with like mental health, his kidneys and physical illnesses. I've had that all my life with my dad... and he suffers with depression pretty bad... it's like quite tough sometimes
> EH: do you look after him?
> Claire: yeah, well I do, I sort of like support my dad in ways, like I help him out with his meals and things like that because since my mum died about five years ago he hasn't really been able to cook, so I give him the odd meal and help him out. And if he's got any problems, if I can help I try and help him with them, you know, yeah.

Laura's grandmother lives in sheltered accommodation and Laura's aunt is her

main carer. Laura helps out with her shopping and washing. She also sometimes cares for the children of a friend and helps her friend deal with the local housing office,

> Laura: I will help her with her children...and even a stupid thing like go down to the council with her and help her, because she is not very good at explaining herself. I will go over for her while she watches the children if she explains to me what exactly she is trying to tell them, or I'll sit there and basically not let them just push her aside

Sharon looks after her grandparents,

> EH: is there anyone else you have to look after apart from your children and yourself?
> Sharon: my Nan and my granddad, I spend a lot of time with them...
> EH: and what do you do for them?
> Sharon: well my Nan can't hardly walk and my granddad can but he's got arthritis and stuff, I go to the shops for them and I do a lot of housework for her

Tina and Rebecca are younger mothers, aged 18 and 17 at the time of their interviews, they both sometimes care for younger half-brothers and sisters, this is in exchange for care of their children at other times,

> Tina: ...[her siblings] are seven and nine [years old]. Sometimes if my mum needs help... like if she's tired they might come down here after school, I might get them after school. She obviously helps me with him [her son] so we sort of swap

> EH: is there anyone else you look after?
> Rebecca: my sister sometimes
> EH: and how do you find that?
> Rebecca: she has the worst behaviour I have ever met in my life
> EH: how old is she?
> Rebecca: she's three...
> EH: and does your mum give you money for looking after her?
> Rebecca: no -
> EH: or is it in return -
> Rebecca: because she has him on the weekends, or when I keep on, I've got to beg her

Joanne, aged 21, describes herself as the "brick person", who holds her family together. She has cared for her brother, her sister (who is addicted to drugs), her baby niece and the children of a friend,

> Joanne: I've had him [her brother] living with me on and off for the last five years, but at the same time, my sister - I've had her living with me on and off, and I had her baby by the court... I had her [a friend] kids every weekend, didn't ever get paid for

> it... her kids go to the same school as mine – she wouldn't pick her kids up on a Friday... I'm then obliged to take her kids... I'm left to baby-sit again, the only time her kids got fed was when they stayed at mine on the weekend, she'd pick them up late Sunday night if she could be bothered, otherwise I was dropping them back at school on the Monday but they only had the clothes they came in... I just used to wash them ready for Monday morning, so they had the same clothes but clean

Of course, most of the interviewees were not just helping others in their social networks, but also received support from family and friends. For example, Laura had left her child with a friend overnight during a time when the police had been called to deal with a fight in the flat below hers. She also describes her best friend as "very, very helpful" and together they go on day trips with their children. Joanne's brother, who lives with her, looks after her children on Sunday mornings if she has been out the previous night. As described above, Tina and Rebecca both look to their mothers for help with childcare, in return for the childcare they provide. Claire explained that when he is well, her dad helps out with her son,

Not all of the interviewees are able to get help from their families,

> Donna: ...my ma's got polio in her foot so it's hard for her to look after my children and it's really hard to get someone to help you out because sometimes, going shopping for instance [is difficult]
>
> Claire: ...like I say it's quite nice because when he's well and that, he'll have [her son] on the odd occasion so I can go out on the odd occasion, but like I said when he's ill, that's it, I don't get no help at all, so yeah I take the good with the bad really

The accounts of lone mothers here raise questions about the nature of social support, social networks, and social inclusion and whether these can be gained from engaging in paid work. Although some lone mothers did express feelings of isolation and loneliness, and there was some agreement with the view that paid work facilitates social networks or inclusion, the accounts in this section show that some mothers are already heavily involved in social networks. In fact, entering paid work might mean that some of these activities, the caring, social support and involvement in unpaid work recounted here, might not be possible if these women were also in paid work. Elaine says she doesn't know any lone mothers who are in paid work, as they would not be able to bring their children to Sure Start groups. Laura explains that it was difficult to be involved with her daughter's education when she dong shift work,

> Laura: ...you miss so much of them growing up... it's like times when she had school trips and I couldn't go, and school plays and I used to have to work it round my working hours, and parent's evenings. And she's asked whether I can go into school to do reading, because other mums do that, but with my working hours, on my days off, I was so shattered...

It is clear that support and social networks, are not just something which 'exist' for the good of individuals, which is perhaps their construction in the NDLP, but that they are made up of relationships between people, which require time, energy and activities that in other contexts would be regarded as 'work' and financially rewarded as such.

Involvement in social and family networks broadens the range of unpaid work that lone mothers engage in. This means the consequences of increased pressure on lone mothers to engage in paid work could be to significantly increase their total workload or diminish the possibility of community-based social inclusion. It could be argued that the promotion of inclusion via paid work as constructed in the NDLP, is not about inclusion that will be achieved by integration in the social networks that paid work offers, but primarily a kind of moral inclusion, as paid labour is the most highly valued form of work. This brings us back to the second theme identified in the promotion of paid work in the NDLP, the personal moral improvement offered by paid work. As outlined above, some women did feel paid work would provide them with greater social contacts, but the timing of entry to paid work had to balanced against the demands of being a lone mother and the other caring activities they were engaged in.

So far, the interviewees have been seen as mothers and as potential employees. Donna and Joanne both talked about wanting something for themselves,

> EH: so do you ever go out without your children? You go to those classes?
> Donna: I take them with me, they always go with me, everywhere I go
> EH: do you get any time on your own?
> Donna: it's very hard, I would love that if I had time on my own

Joanne has had a number of caring responsibilities and she explained that she had spent so much time looking after other people, that she now felt "I want to do

something for me". For Joanne this would be the computer course that she was planning to start. In chapter ten, the functions and meanings of training are considered in more depth.

The compulsory work-focussed interview

In this section I turn to the views of interviewees on the compulsory work-focussed interview element of the NDLP. Of the women who gave a clear opinion on this issue, there was an equal split between women who were against the idea of any pressure to enter paid work and women who thought there should be some coercion, but only once their children had reached a certain age. Isabelle perhaps expressed the strongest views on this subject. I explained to her that benefits payments could be reduced for repeated non-attendance at a compulsory work-focussed interview,

> Isabelle: I'd be kicking arse over that one, I wouldn't be happy with that at all. At the end of the day whether you are a lone parent or whatever... to be quite honest, I don't see that it has got anything to do with anyone on the government side of things anyway. If you don't want to go in and talk to someone about the fact that you are a lone parent and everything, and getting back to work... then why the bloody hell should you? And they sure as hell shouldn't be cutting your money for it, no - you get your letter saying - the law says you are allowed to live on this much money - they cut that and they are putting you straight under the poverty line anyway, they are stuffing themselves up, they do it themselves...

Isabelle argues against compulsory work-focussed interviews by invoking the idea of the rights of lone mothers to have privacy to live their lives as they choose. Elaine and Joanne expressed similar views to Isabelle, but with different justifications. Elaine gives her views on the compulsory work-focussed interviews for lone parents making their first claim for income support,

> Elaine: I think that is really wrong because if they have just become a lone parent, it means they have lost one parent and I think that probably means their child needs them more, not less... they have already had all these changes, the child, from the child's point of view in their lives, so I think that's wrong
> EH: well, they won't be forced to go into work but they do have to talk about it
> Elaine: it's an extra pressure isn't it? That probably they could do without at that point in their lives, if they've just become a lone parent then it's obviously a great deal for them to deal with at the end of the day

Joanne was against the idea of compulsory interviews and in this extract expresses the idea that compulsion would not be effective, as lone parents won't enter paid work unless they are ready,

> EH: and had you heard of the New Deal for Lone Parents?
> Joanne: ...you don't hear about... you know what I mean? Where am I hearing about it? The schools aren't saying it, no one is saying it... and it isn't like it is plastered on television. I think if they were to plaster it on television... a lot of people would get fed up with being hassled about it, do you know what I mean? But I think unless you are willing and able to go out [to work], you aren't going to

Gail was also against pressure on lone mothers to enter paid work, here because of the difficulties being an employee and a mother,

> EH: do you think lone parents should have to work or do you think they should be allowed to choose?
> Gail: should be more of a choice really... you should really have some sort of choice or flexibility because I know it is quite hard with an employer to get a job and get suitable time off for school holidays, because I know a few people in situations – trying to get time off for school holidays is quite hard really because they're not flexible and saying "yeah you can have all the school holidays off", they still want you to work and you're struggling to get childcare and stuff

Fiona and Laura also thought they should not be pressure on lone mothers to enter paid employment,

> Fiona: well I don't think they [lone parents] should be pushed because not everyone will be up for that will they? So they should lay off a little bit and let the parents go themselves and not be pushed into it
>
> EH: ...do you think there should be pressures on lone mums to go to work?
> Laura: I don't think there should be pressure, I don't know, there has to be a different way of going round it

Beth found it difficult to answer this question, but like six other interviewees she thought mothers should be in paid work, once their children are a "suitable age",

> EH: Do you think that lone mothers should work?
> Beth: It's a hard question. I think they should work once their child gets to a suitable age. They shouldn't use the excuse, "I got a child so I shouldn't work". But I don't think they should be pressurised into working and all that, at the expense of their child
>
> EH: do you think lone parents should have to go to the job centre and talk to somebody?

Helen: no I think it should be your choice... I reckon it should be the mother's choice when they're young and that, obviously when they're like six and seven or eight and nine, it's totally different because then they can cope by their self a bit more then

EH: do you think new lone parents should have to go and talk about work?
Kate: I don't know, it all depends, all depends on what you are doing. If you got like a little new born baby... then no, but obviously if your child is at school and you're sitting round all day claiming benefit then, I don't know it all depends really

EH: how would you feel if you got a letter from the job centre?
Natalie: annoyed...
EH: do you think mums or lone mothers should have to go to work at any point?
Natalie: when their kids are at junior school

EH: ...should lone parents have to work when their children are a certain age like 16 or -
Paula: not so much 16 I don't think, no probably about five, when they start school properly

EH: some lone parents with older children get a letter and have to go to talk about work at a job centre... what do you think about that, do you think that should happen? Do you think lone mothers should have to work?
Rebecca: I don't think there is any reason why they can't go part time... I would have said after two or three there isn't no reason why you can't go part time

Tina: that's quite good, because like its not right, I don't think, for people to - especially if you are young and you do fall pregnant, and you can't work once you've had the baby, then you do need help. Once you've been helped and then you are back in the situation where you can work, I think you should go back to work, I don't think you should just carry on and just keep taking the money once you've got no reason not to work

Melissa felt strongly that women should want to be in paid work and not be in receipt of income support,

EH: ...some lone parents have to go to these work-focussed interviews, they do have to talk but not get a job, they get three chances to go in and then their benefits can get cut... so what do you think about that sort of idea?
Melissa: I think that's right, I hate being on income support, I hate it, its crap...

Conclusion

In the terms of the NDLP, paid work has both morally improving and socially including functions. The compulsory work-focussed interview has a role in the moral policing of lone mothers, reminding them of the labour market and that eventually they will need to enter paid work or move onto jobseekers allowance, where it is mandatory to be actively seeking paid work. In this chapter, I have shown that some of the interviewees concurred with the promotion of paid work

in the NDLP as a route to social inclusion and moral improvement, but they did not follow New Labour's 'obstacles' approach; this meant that while paid work is valued in the abstract, these lone mothers did not see it as fitting with into their lives at the time of the interview.

The views of lone mothers on housework and full time motherhood were complex. A number of interviewees rejected the idea that these activities should be seen as work or as a job, but when asked to think about combining lone motherhood and paid work, the time, energy and labour that housework and mothering demands was revealed. I considered the range of caring and related activities the lone mothers were involved in and argued that the assumptions that lone mothers are socially excluded and that paid work is a cure for this are misplaced. Perhaps the clearest message of this discussion was that the reality of the lives of lone mothers is much less straight-forward than government policy allows for.

In the following three chapters, some of the themes raised here are considered in greater depth. In chapter nine the breadth of the unpaid work that lone mothers are engaged in is considered in a discussion of the importance of creating a decent home. In chapter ten, I consider the functions and meanings of participating in training for the lone mothers. This chapter revisits the loneliness and boredom that has been documented above, to argue that for some women training can lessen feelings of isolation, while not having the impact on their lives that they anticipate paid work bringing. Before this, the next chapter explores the question of the timing of entry to paid work, to look at when the lone mothers feel it would be appropriate for them to (re)enter employment.

Chapter eight

Timing of entry to paid work

In this chapter I explore in greater detail the timetables of the lone mothers in terms of when entry to paid work is planned. Duncan and Edwards (1999) suggest that attitudes around paid work and lone mothering are locally held and shared. As suggested in chapter seven the planned timing of entry to paid work was often expressed by the interviewees in terms of an age their only or youngest child would need to reach. Paid work may also be conceptualised as a transition that will be made once other areas of life have been 'sorted out'. I describe this as paid work being understood as part of a *wider life project*. The construction of paid work as appropriate once a child has reached a certain age may be based on values or discourses around mothering, or alternatively be based on logistical factors which mean paid work will feasibly fit in the mothers' daily routine once the child is in full time schooling.

Thirteen of the interviewees identified an age their child(ren) would have to reach before it would be appropriate to enter paid work, and the emphasis here was on entry to part time paid work. Five of the women said it would be appropriate to enter paid work once their child(ren) was attending nursery, often giving the age of three years old. The other eight women thought they should begin paid work once their youngest/only child was in full time school, aged around five years old. All of these women talked about initially entering part time work and then increasing their hours as their child(ren) got older. In some of the accounts there was a strong emphasis on the value of being at 'at home' with their children rather than entering into paid work. In the extracts below the strength of the assumption that a mother's role is to prioritise the care of, and being with, her child(ren) can be seen,

> EH: and when he starts school, do you think that will be strange for you?
> Paula: I don't know, I do want to go back to work *but obviously I don't want to be going back into work now* and be missing like the first things he is doing now

EH: do you think it would be good or bad for your daughter when you begin paid work
Fiona: I don't think it matters when they're so young, and she'll be going to nursery when she's three, *I'll have to do the hours around her obviously*

This taken for granted prioritising of children over employment during these early years of childhood can also be seen in Kate's account –

Kate: if I didn't have another one I would think, "right it's time to go out and get a job", but obviously when you've got little ones running round, that is the last thing on your mind

The idea of entry to paid work being dictated by when children begin nursery and school, and ensuring hours of paid work and nursery/school hours coincide were recurring themes in the interview accounts,

Gail:...I think she's a bit young to be put in a crèche all day, when she's a bit older, probably like nursery age I'll go back to work

Natalie: I'll probably only start going to work when he is at junior school and only while he's at school so I am there to take him to school and pick him up
EH: what age is that?
Natalie: about five or six I think, primary school

EH: and would your children have to be a certain age for you to consider that [entering paid work]?
Sharon: hopefully when my youngest goes to proper school, or part time sort of like

EH: and you talked about the pub, do you think you would ever want to do a bit of part time work?
Isabelle: yeah, I wouldn't mind doing part time but that is going to have to wait for when she goes to school full time and has got to be well within her hours

EH: you wouldn't think about going into work?
Melissa: I will do as soon as she is full time, I won't do when she is in nursery because it would be, not a waste of time, but I've got other things as well, I've got my life - when she goes to full time school then yeah definite
EH: so then, you think you might go into work once your youngest is -
Melissa: yeah definitely I'll be straight in there, yeah

Helen: I won't want to get a job till they're both at school and they're both settled

Yvonne:...basically I want to get a job working with kids that is going to be around the same hours that [her son] will do, *so my time binds around his time*

'Time binding' – the importance of doing the school run

As Yvonne so clearly expresses, above, the dominant idea here is that mother's time must 'bind around' the time children spend at nursery/school. A number of

factors appear to contribute to the view that entry to nursery/school marks the time that mothers will begin seeking paid work. To some extent this is may be determined by the nationally defined age for beginning compulsory education and the local provision of free nursery care places. The lone mothers are using entry to school/nursery as a marker for their entry to paid work, but only anticipating being in paid work during school hours. For some of the interviewees this is linked to a sense that to be at home while the children are not there is to be 'doing nothing'; it is when the children are away that they become 'workless'. A key reason for anticipating paid work or training that coincides with the hours of school/nursery is the importance placed on being available to drop off and collect children from school,

> EH: will you think about going to work then [when youngest goes to school] or stay at home?
> Natalie: I'll probably only start going to work when he is at junior school and only while he's at school *so I am there to take him to school and pick him up*

> Donna: if I had my way, what I'd like to do, I know they have like if you do computers in Hartcliffe they have a clait[17], and they've got a clait there if you do computers but I doubt if they do it on the fashion designing side which is what I would like to do, but then it's hard because I might not be able to do what I want to do because it might end up going too far and *I got to come back over these sides to pick up my kids by a certain time*, but I don't know if I want to do computers

Young children have to be collected from school by someone, in two parent households this i s usually the mother. In one-parent households, lone mothers may be the only adult available –

> Beth:...I want paid employment, but it's trying to find something that slots in, because they say about this New Deal but they forget about childcare and if you're a lone parent you haven't got another partner who can pick him up

Claire uses the term 'deadline', language more usually associated with world of paid work to explain the importance of dropping off and picking up her son on time, he is her deadline,

> Claire:...I weren't expecting to get a local job, I even went and took my CBT test, my motorcycle test, just in case - because transport's not that good round here, you know, to get you to and from, *and when you're on a deadline to pick up your children and to drop them off as well, it's difficult* – because really if you live in the

[17] Clait refers to a qualification in computing

> local area and you've got children, you know, it's better if you can get a local job at the end of the day

Other interviewees referred to the necessity of having to pick up children, and also, in the cases of Helen and Yvonne, feeling this role is their responsibility,

> EH: would you want to be picking them up from school?
> Helen: *well who else is going to do it*? Sometimes my mum might be able to it but not all the time, they're my responsibility, at the end of the day, I shouldn't have to rely on anybody else, I had them

> EH: so is it important for you to be there to pick him up
> Yvonne: yeah, I can get family, like my ma only lives round the corner from [local school] so she will be able to pick him up if I can't make it or whatever, but I'd prefer to stand on my own two feet, *he's my child so I should be picking him up from school*, like obviously if something happens and I end up in hospital or something, or I'm not there, then I can't help it, but if I can help it then I want me to be the one to take him to school and pick him up and when he isn't very well go and pick him up from school and when he isn't this – basically I want to stand on my own feet, he is my child so I will look after him and I'll do whatever needs to be done for him. I don't want everyone do it for him, basically when I am his mum, I don't want him thinking anyone else is his mum, I wants it "my ma does this, my ma does everything" basically, so -

So a number of the interviewees talked about their entry to paid work being primarily determined by finding a vacancy, which would fit well with school hours. This will be explored in more detail below and Laura is a good example of this -

> Laura: I've even looked at going out to the mushroom farm because they do a school hour shift, they will pick you up outside the school gates once you've dropped your children off and they will drop you off again at the school gates at half past two, so you are working the hours your children are at school and you're being dropped off and picked up outside the school

Above, Natalie is quoted as saying she would only engage in paid work that fitted with school hours, and later she is cautious about the possibility of using after school clubs for childcare,

> EH: what about after school clubs - what do you think about them?
> Natalie: I don't know because I don't know what school he would be going to, so -
> EH: so it would depend on the area he was in?
> Natalie: yeah and who his friends were

This shows that the provision of childcare alone does not solve the 'problem' of combining lone motherhood and paid work, but use of childcare is mediated by mother's attitudes and own experiences (Duncan et al 2004). This last point is

clear in Rebecca's views,

EH: and did your mum always work when you were growing up?
Rebecca: yeah, always did
EH: did that mean you had to look after the younger ones [her siblings]?
Rebecca: no, they went - I didn't like it, I can remember I hated it because she went to work everyday – I wouldn't ever work full time, not with him being little, not until he left home – I wouldn't work full time
EH: why did you hate it?
Rebecca: because I was with other people, had to stay with other people

Rebecca's experiences of being apart from her mother after school have informed her view that she will not work full time until her son has left home.

In some of these accounts we also begin to see the importance placed on 'being there', for and with children as part of the mothering role (see Ribbens 1994: 128-9, Reid Boyd 2002). Yvonne and Helen both express a desire to be present when the school day finishes and conceptualise this as part of the role of a responsible mother. They both mention that their mothers might be available to collect their children, but reject the possibility of this happening routinely. This construction of the responsible lone mother contrasts with the image in New Labour policy (chapter three). For New Labour, the sign of responsible parenthood is time spent in paid work, not how much time is spent with your children.

Seeing firsts and spending time with children

Entry to nursery/school emerges as the time considered appropriate to return to paid work but this is not only because nursery/school frees up women's time to allow for a space for paid work by providing childcare. Some of the interviewees talked about wanting to be with their children during the early years to watch the milestones of their development. This is a point that Paula makes twice in her interview -

EH: do you think mums with children the age of yours [one year old] should work or be at home or -
Paula: I don't know, obviously everyone have got their own opinion - me personally, I would rather be at home, in the first few years anyway. *I don't want to miss out on all his first things* and that so - so I'd rather wait till that is done sort of thing and once he is in nursery, get a job like between those times

EH: and when he starts school, do you think that will be strange for you?
Paula: I don't know, I do want to go back to work *but obviously I don't want to be*

going back into work now and be missing like the first things he is doing now, like starting now

Rebecca shares the importance of seeing the 'first things',

> Rebecca:...I mean I can't say I want to [enter paid work] until he is about two, not really, so that I have seen him doing everything, not going home and somebody saying to me, "oh yeah by the way he walked for the first time today, you missed it", but I would have said after two or three there isn't no reason why you can't go part time

Helen makes a similar point, emphasising that she wants time to get to know her children. She presents this time with her children as something she has earned the right to have, as previously she has been in paid work and intends to return,

> EH: are their good things about being at home, though?
> Helen: yeah, because you learn about them, *you see their first things what they do.* You know what they like to eat, and all that – it's like you have children, *you should be able to do all that stuff with them before you go off back to work or whatever, because I did work before I fell pregnant with her*

Here we are building up a picture of feelings about early childhood, the importance of being present and also a sense of enjoyment of motherhood. For some interviewees, the downside of paid work is that it means time away from children and would mean missing out on their 'first things' and the day to day experiences of being with a child growing up, this is particularly clear in Gail's comments -

> EH: so do you think mums with children the age of yours [eighteen months old] should work?
> Gail: it should be their choice, but my personal opinion is that I'd rather see her grow up, because she's my first as well, rather see her do things and stuff, *be involved in her growing up, sort of thing - if you go back to work you miss her learning to crawl, learning to walk, sort of thing, it's just sort of nice to see them progress isn't it really?*

Here the logic of these mothers is almost the reverse of the construction of their lives in policy terms. The mothers quoted above are not thinking of themselves as 'workless' as paid work is simply not in their sights, as Kate says, above, "when you've got little ones running round, that [paid work] is the last thing on your mind". At the suggestion of (re)/entering paid work, these interviewees argue that *then* a void in their lives would be created – to be missing out on the day to day

experiences of mothering and seeing the 'firsts' in their child's development. The interviewees talk about enjoying spending time with their children and the positives of motherhood, elements that sometimes seem to be missing in New Labour's portrayal of lone motherhood (see Duncan 2002: 555), or else not valued as highly as participation in paid work.

The needs of children

The interviewees in the previous section talked about not entering paid work in the early years of their children's lives because of the experiences they would miss. Some interviewees also framed the importance of their presence during this time in terms of the needs of their children. Beth was unable to give an age at which she would enter full time paid work, as this would depend on the needs of her son, who earlier in the interview she described as "very shy" –

> EH: Do you think it would be part time or full time work?
> Beth: I don't want to work full time... because he's too young, once he gets to an older age
> EH: Like what sort of age?
> Beth: It's hard to say, it depends on the child – he's a very mummy orientated...
> [interrupted by council workman arriving]

Claire does envisage that she might extend her working hours to full time once her son is aged between eight and ten but that this would not currently be appropriate, at the time of the interview he is five years old,

> EH: do you think you'll ever go up to full time work? Were you looking for part time work?
> Claire: yeah I was looking for part time, I can't see myself going to full time till he's about between eight and ten, I couldn't see that, no way because I mean at his age he's still very demanding, very demanding at that age, you know

Both Claire and Beth emphasise the needs of their child to have their mother present, which means part time work during school hours is most appropriate. The child's need for the presence of his/her mother to be around them may be felt especially acutely by lone mothers, as Claire explains –

> Claire: I find that if you're the only one with them all the time, then they want you all the time and that... it's difficult like I said

Kate talks about her youngest son, Jamie, as needing her to be at home and not in paid work in the pre-school years. James has special needs and is two years old, his brother, Tim, is five years old,

> EH: so do you think you'll go back to work when they're at school?
> Kate: when they're at school and I knows I seen them do what they've got to do, grow up. I think that Jamie's age, not so much Tim's age, I can always spend time. with Tim in the night time if I do go to work, *but Jamie needs me, do you know what I mean*? *Especially with his problems as well, I needs to be with him* and if I was at work all day, I'd miss out on so much of him
> EH: and would he miss out as well?
> Kate: yeah he'd miss out *because obviously he needs me*, he wouldn't have my input. I won't see him do things, like his learning

Here, Kate brings together some of the themes discussed around the timing of entry to paid work. She talks about wanting to be able to spend time with her sons to see them develop, to grow up. Kate describes paid work in negative terms "*if I was at work all day, I'd miss out on so much of him*", showing her valuing the time she gets to spend with her youngest child. This also shows her understanding of paid work, in contrast to the construction of paid work in the NDLP. Kate presents paid work as taking away from her life, conflicting with the needs of her son and meaning that both of them would "miss out". In the promotion of the NDLP, paid work is always presented in additive terms; the emphasis is on what it adds to the lives of lone mothers and their children. Kate makes these statements about the importance of her being at home despite also talking about the isolation and difficulties of her situation. For Kate, paid work is not seen as the solution to these problems, instead she talks about the importance of local groups and training courses. Lack of paid work is not seen as a problem, nor is it seen as a solution to the difficulties Kate does experience.

Kate finds it hard to identify an age her children would have to reach before she enters paid work,

> EH: what age do you think he would have to be [for you to enter paid work] or would it depend -
> Kate: I can't really judge with Jamie because... I think when they are about five or six... I looks at it, at the end of the day, if you've got kids you should be with them until they're old enough, not to fend on their own, but till they're old enough for me to go to work - so they're old enough to be with someone and they're not like asking for mummy "where's mummy?" - for them to understand. I think if I just had Tim he'd be at the right time to say "mummy's got to go to work" – he would

understand, but Jamie isn't understanding yet

Other interviewees also anticipated they would begin paid work once their child reached an age where s/he could understand the situation; so entry to paid work is being connected again to a stage in the development of the child. This idea was sometimes linked with entering paid work once their child had begun full time school and was settled there. Gail is planning to work in childcare,

EH: about how long would it be before you go back [to work], you said you'd do part time?
Gail: yeah, just sort of like part time - like when she goes to nursery, when she's settled in there I probably will, and like when she goes to the first year of reception class at school and *she is quite settled down I might do more hours*. Just like for the first couple of years at school, get her into a routine sort of thing, when she's a bit older then, yeah go back and do more hours
EH: so just see how it goes -
Gail: yeah because when she's at nursery and reception just do like a couple of hours, when she's at school so she isn't going to know any different, but then when she's a bit older you can say "look mum's going to work for this amount of time and someone else will be picking up", and *just trying to get her used to the atmosphere of being at school really*

EH: so do you think you will go to work when your children get to a certain age?
Joanne: when they're older - to have a bit of responsibility on their own, well not on their own but, *a little bit older in order to understand*

Helen: ...I won't want to get a job till they're both at school and they're both settled basically...

These interviewees are prioritising the transition of their child(ren) into full time school before their own transition to paid work. These lone mothers see the entrance of their children into full time education as an important transition, and one that is best supported by their full time presence. The paid worklessness of lone mothers here should be understood as a prioritising of the perceived needs of their children. In the NDLP engagement of mothers in paid work is understood as best for the future of children. So here again, the interviewees understanding of their situation contradicts with the policy logic. These interviewees are saying that full time mothering is best for their children and supportive of their future education by easing their transition into full time school. This is perhaps best seen in Gail's account when she talks about "just trying to get her used to the atmosphere of being at school really".

Comments on prioritising children's needs over paid work were not only made in

relation to the transition to full time school, but also after this transition had been made,

> EH: so do you hope your kids will stay on at school or -
> Joanne: I really do hope so, and if I have to drag my kids and sit there in their lessons and not go to work I would rather sit there, and be in their school and make sure they are doing something

The Labour governments of 1997-2001 and 2001- have heavily emphasised and legislated for parental responsibility for truancy. In the extract above, Joanne reflects the difficulties for parents of monitoring children's attendance at school and engaging in paid work (see Standing 1999). For Joanne, the education of her children comes first and she would leave paid work if necessary. Support for children's education and future well-being is understood to be through her presence, not through her involvement in paid work.

Laura's story

In this section I consider the experiences of combining paid work and lone motherhood for one interviewee, Laura, as her story vividly conveys some of the difficulties of being an employee and a lone mother. Laura is the mother of a five year old and at the time of the interview had left paid work about a year after her return. Laura had been doing shift work, "…I was doing two twelve hour shifts in a row and then having two days off". She describes her long hours as "the biggest mistake I made" as she felt she was having too much time away from her daughter,

> Laura: …I did find I was missing out on a lot, I was missing her a lot. Even though I had those two solid days with her after it was never the same and also she goes to her father three weekends out of four. We did eventually manage to work it out that she was with him the three weekends that I was working - I used to do one Saturday, one Sunday, one full weekend and then have one off, but I used to still feel a bit hard done by - when I had my Sunday off and she was still with her father, because at the end of the day I hadn't seen her throughout the week as well. I know it wasn't his fault, but it was like, I'd be sat here waiting for her to come home on a Sunday

Laura talks about "missing" her daughter, in the sense of getting to spend time with her and "missing out" on seeing her growing up and develop. Laura has also experienced the difficulties of combining paid work and an interest in her daughter's education – not being able to join her on school trips. Paid work has

also meant she couldn't be involved in volunteer work at the school, listening to children read. Standing's research (1999) highlighted the problems lone mothers find in combining paid work and involvement in their children's education, both of which are constructed in policy as the roles of the good, responsible, lone mother. Being involved in the activities of their child's school should be understood as an important part of the social inclusion of lone mothers and their children and this may be a kind of inclusion that is particularly valued by mothers and their children. As Laura says, "she's asked whether I can go into school to do reading because other mums do that but with my working hours, on my days off I was so shattered". Again paid work is seen as taking away from the lives of lone mothers and their children, not in the positive, additive terms of its NDLP representation. Now that Laura has left her job that demanded long hours she is looking for a job that will enable her to spend more time with her daughter,

> Laura: if I could get something, it doesn't matter if I can't take her and pick her up from school, as long as I can do one or other, if that makes sense and the actual period of time that she's without me is only like an hour, obviously if I could get something that was an eight to two shift rota, in a nursing home, that would be ideal for me - because I'd know that definitely I have got people who would be willing for [her daughter] to go down and get ready for school and take her to school - I know that's not a problem at all and I can come home at two o'clock, pick her up, give her her tea, put her to bed

Laura's story shows a lone mother continuing to value time spent with her child, after the milestones of early development have been reached. In the discourse of the work-life balance, Laura is attempting to tip the scales so her life, spending time with her daughter, is prioritised over her role as an employee. When taken as a whole the accounts of the interviewees in this chapter reinforce my argument that lone mothers do not follow New Labour's 'obstacle' explanation for their lack of participation in paid work. Many of the interviewees have their own sense of when entering paid work will be appropriate. This is influenced by wanting to spend time with their young children, seeing the 'firsts' of development, prioritising the needs of their children and their transition to full time school.

Paid work as part of a wider life project

A few of the women were unable to state an age their child(ren) would have to reach before they would begin paid work. Donna and Joanne were both examples of this and in common they both had quite vague ideas about the type of paid work they would like to do in the future. Joanne's uncertainty about the type of work she would enter explained her inability to give a time she planned to begin paid work -

> EH: you were saying about a certain age [the children would have to be before entering paid work] – through junior school?
> Joanne: yeah, I would rather like go to college and get something behind me, you know what I mean? And actually have the qualifications to be able to do something, then go out and get the job, so I wouldn't really know when because if it took me five years to get the qualification then yeah I would go out and get that job, if it took me ten years, then I'd wait the ten years to go out and get that job type of thing

Donna was also unable to say when she hoped to return to paid work, but like Joanne she was keen to stress that eventually she would be employed,

> Donna: ...and even if I end up being fifty - because I got kids it's hard for me to work at the moment - I'm not going to be on the dole all my life, even if I have to wait another couple more years I'm still going to end up doing something

Donna and Joanne signal that they recognise the importance of paid work, by emphasising that eventually they will enter employment. Here Donna explains that it is difficult for her to do paid work at the moment because of her three children. At the time of the interview, her youngest child was six months old and had been suffering from health problems since birth. In addition to this, Donna stressed throughout her interview that her current goal was "to get my house sorted" and that this was her main focus. Other women also reflected the way in which paid work may be seen as part of a *wider life project*. This was perhaps true for all of the women who aimed to begin paid work once their child had reached nursery/school – in these terms their current life project was their child(ren) and for a number their children would remain the focus, with paid work being entered into but always having less importance. Other interviewees talked about other aspects of their wider life project that needed to be dealt with before the time for paid work would be reached. After the birth of her son, Claire

embarked upon what I have termed a *training career* (see chapter ten), here she describes that this was part of her "action plan",

> EH: are you looking forward to it [beginning part time work]?
> Claire: yeah, yeah I am definitely - well I've always worked, one way or the other if I'm not working here then I've been working at my home, I mean I decorated my whole house out from top to bottom. I mean my aim was to do my studies and to get my home sorted out before I started work. I did have an action plan on what I was doing and I think I stuck to it quite well actually, and you know I sorted out my house, I landscaped my garden myself as well, built an aviary, you know – so jack of all trades, master of none – that's how I feel

Claire's quote shows the strongly felt need among some lone mothers to create a decent home, "to get my house sorted out", before embarking on the next stage of their life transition – into paid work. Claire's story again shows that some lone mothers have carefully planned their timing of entry to paid work. These decisions are not based on a lack of information about paid work or the tax credits system, but place paid work as just one element in the whole of their lives, not the defining aspect.

Elaine returned to paid work between the births of her third and fourth children, but found it difficult to manage,

> Elaine: it's not worth going back to work on family credit, because you don't actually get any more money - because I've done that and it doesn't work, you actually end up in some ways worse off

Instead Elaine has shifted her focus to involvement with Sure Start and concern for women and children in the area –

> EH: who are the important people in your life?
> Elaine: my children and sort of like the children round here. I do actually genuinely care about them as well, because I want them to have better lives and better opportunities, I want them to have more confidence really in themselves

This concern means that Elaine foresees her future in voluntary work on the estate. Stemming from her participation in the management of Sure Start, Elaine is not thinking in terms of paid work at all but about her role in the community doing voluntary work. Under Sure Start's fourth objective, 'strengthening families and communities', is a target for a 12% decrease in the number of

'workless' households in Sure Start areas by 2004. Although parent participation is another target, under these terms of 'worklessness' Elaine is a failure for Sure Start. Elaine's story provides a clear example of the problem with the narrow definition of work for New Labour, where what counts as work is paid work. The activities of voluntary work, mothering and caring don't count as far as the 'workless' target is concerned. While these unpaid activities may sometimes be valued in rhetoric they are not rewarded in material terms. Elaine's participation in Sure Start in a voluntary capacity highlights how difficult involvement in community or voluntary work could be for lone mothers engaged in full time employment. Elaine's current life project is her voluntary work and paid work has a secondary role. As a fall back plan, Elaine plans to go into teacher training if her voluntary work does not go as planned.

The last example of paid work as part of a wider life project is in the case of Zoe. She has a five year old son and has had various jobs since he was born, including bar work, cleaning and youth work. However, mental health problems have led her to leave employment and currently she is involved in a few training courses. Zoe's goal is to return to full health and then return to paid work,

> Zoe: I want to get back to work, I want to get money coming in but it's just hard
> EH: so you need to wait till you feel better?
> Zoe: yeah I can't do it yet because I still get tired in the day, still get my mood swings, personality changes [waves to child outside room]
> EH: so when things calm down, what would you like to do?
> Zoe: back to youth work or bar work

Conclusion

For these women in a range of different circumstances; sorting their house out, being involved in voluntary work, and experiencing illness, the transition to paid work is seen as a gradual process, as part of their wider life project. Paid work is not necessarily a priority for these women but a stage that will be reached once other goals have been met. It is this slow and careful transition to paid work, important for the welfare and well-being of these women and their children that would be at stake if further compulsion to search for or engage in paid work

became a condition of eligibility for income support. These cases also illustrate the fact that provision of information, though important, is not necessarily the key to increasing the employment rate of lone parents. A comparison of the impact of the NDLP in its pilot areas, suggested that after 12 months the number of lone parents on income support was 3.3% lower than if the programme had not been running (Hales et al 2000). More recent quantitative research by Gregg and Harkness (2003) has suggested the impact of the NDLP service and the wider welfare-to-work policies has been a 5% increase in the employment rate of lone mothers. As the authors point out, this increase will not be sufficient to meet the government's target of 70% of lone mothers in employment by 2010. In 2001 the employment rate of lone parents was 47.8% (National Statistics 2003). These results suggest that only a small percentage of non-employed lone mothers make the transition to paid work because of current policies. This is not surprising in the context of the qualitative material here which has shown that self-defined lone mothers have their own timetables for when entry to paid work is appropriate, often based on the age and development of their child(ren) and may approach paid work as one part of a wider life project.

In the next chapter, I explore the lone mothers' accounts of home in more depth and consider the place of family, friends and partners in their lives.

Chapter nine

The place of home, partners, family and friends in the lives of lone mothers

In the first part of this chapter I turn to an issue that has received little attention in lone mother research literature, the place of home in the lives of lone mothers. The importance of creating a decent home and the variety of meanings and experiences of home was a theme that emerged in the course of the fieldwork. While feminist writers have drawn attention to the way in which the home can be a source of oppression for women, in the experience of domestic violence and the unending burdens of domestic labour, little attention has been paid to the significance of home specifically in the lives of lone mothers. In this chapter the tensions between the home being experienced as a place of refuge and also as a site of isolation and fear will be explored, as well as the way that creating a decent home is experienced as a symbol of 'good mothering'. The way lone mothers construct their accounts of the place and experiences of home is considered with reference to a number of factors: these include whether the lone mother has insider or outsider status in the area; the perception and experience of crime; racism; social networks; and the experience of mothering. At times the stories move beyond the boundaries of the home, into the wider social worlds of extended family, friends and neighbours. The neglect of issues around home for lone mothers is part of the neglect of the 'maternal' or social worlds of mothers (Ribbens 1994: 4, Bell and Ribbens 1994: 254) and of the site where much of the caring labour of lone mothers is carried out (see chapter one). In the second part of the chapter, I consider the intimate relationships of the lone mothers.

The place of home in the lives of lone mothers

Stories of home

It is perhaps not surprising that stories of the home were such a consistent theme

in the interview accounts. Keeping or trying to find a home is often the first problem that lone mothers face, either on separation from their partner or with the birth of their first child (Hardey 1989: 125). Along with this often comes the problem of decorating and equipping the home, the cost of which present a difficulty for many lone parents, perhaps particularly for younger mothers (Hardey 1989: 129, Rowlingson and McKay 2002: 203). For some of these younger women particularly, but sometimes for the older mothers, creating a home emerged as a symbol of their transition to motherhood/adulthood or as a new stage in the life of the family. This was the case with Donna, the mother of three children who are mixed race. A theme repeated many times in her interview was the need to "get my house sorted", for example,

> Donna: I've had to cancel a lot of the stuff at the moment because I'm trying to sort my house... I look at my kids and they've been through a lot, I've been in refuges, bed and breakfasts and that, I had to move out of my other flat because of race harassment I was getting and I don't think my children need to go through that, they deserve better and I want them to have a nice place, do you know what I mean, yeah they've got a roof over their head which is the main part, I want them to have nice things, I want them to feel they can be comfortable in their home

For Donna "getting her house sorted" means redecorating and repairing her home to create a comfortable, calm and stable environment for her children, marking a new stage in the life of the family, which will be settled and certain. Zoe, aged 22, who has completed the project of decorating her home as she wants, describes it as "lovely, it is a maisonette, I got it up to how I want it". Getting her house to be how she wants it makes a contrast to the early years of her son's life –

> Zoe: it was a bit upside down because I kept on moving and everything... like I was living in boxes for the first three years

Zoe kept moving house because of the areas she was living in, "bad areas and I got into the wrong company". By settling into her present house and spending money on it, like Donna she is establishing herself in a permanent and stable home and life.

Other women also drew on these ideas of "getting your house sorted" and also saw this as an important stage in the life of the family and for creating stability

and security in their lives. In the account of Isabelle, getting her house sorted, which seemed a long way off, is constructed as the building the necessary foundation for sorting out the rest of her life:

> EH: so there is not enough help to get your house started?
> Isabelle: no there definitely isn't, and that is one of the worst things I would say. Once you've got your house in order, everything else falls into place, you know, and you can cope with things better... I haven't even got half the furniture I need yet, you know

There was wide variation in the level of help the women reported receiving in setting up their homes. Some had managed to receive grants from a local charity; others had had loans of various amounts from the social fund, or borrowed money or received second-hand goods from family. The level of debt accrued in building up a home was the negative side of making the transition to a new way of life. Based on his research in the mid 1960s, Marsden (1973: 39) commented that for women without capital "a decent home would be built up only at the expense of an adequate diet and clothing" (1973: 39), thirty years later, there is still a price to be paid for having a decent home. For Zoe the consequence is not being able to afford to pay her heating bills:

> Zoe: I haven't got no gas at the moment
> EH: no -
> Zoe: so I am freezing
> EH: is that because there is a problem or because you haven't got heating?
> Zoe: I haven't got no money,
> EH: so is that going to get better do you think?
> Zoe: no, because I'm only on £77 a week and I pay out a lot of money [in loan repayments], because of what I wanted basically [to sort out her house]

"Getting the house sorted" can be experienced as celebratory of a new stage of life, but also as oppressive, as an ever-present reminder of the burden of debt it has generated. When talking about debt and furnishing their home some of the women who were interviewed in their home would look around and relate where each piece of furniture came from, and whether money was still owed for it. Where interviewees said that all the furniture had been paid for, this was usually in houses that were quite sparsely furnished. A number of interviewees also talked about putting their children first when it came to redecorating and furnishing, so that their own bedroom remained unimproved. These points are

reflected in the following exchange with Kate and her five year old son:

> EH: and how did you get the furniture and stuff when you moved in?
> Kate: …everything in here is paid for, well there isn't much in here (laughs)
> Kate's son: mum, you haven't got nothing
> Kate: that's because I give you everything!

The captive lone mother?

The previous section began to explore a more negative dimension of the place of home in the lives of lone mothers in terms of the debt and financial worries it can represent. In previous research with mothers and housewives, much attention has been given to the isolation associated with these roles (Gavron 1966, Oakley 1976). Gavron carried out research with mothers caring for young children, and she described motherhood as "a kind of captivity" (1966: 150). These studies influenced later research around motherhood (see Devine 1989) but have been criticised for employing an analysis which equated 'mother' with 'isolated housewife' and may therefore have overlooked some of the complexities of mothers' social relations (Bell and Ribbens 1994: 228, 231). Evidence from research studies by Bell and Ribbens suggest considerable involvement of mothers in social networks which prompt them to raise questions about the nature of exclusion from social networks and the experience of isolation, which could not be answered by their data:

> "What are the sorts of characteristics that help to shape mothers' contacts, how do women select some women for sociability or close friendship? Do some people get particularly excluded from these networks and on what basis?" (1994: 255).

Elsewhere the idea of 'isolation' has not received such thorough consideration, and the idea that certain lone mothers must be isolated in some way persists, though where this isolation comes from seems difficult to determine. For Hardey, (1989: 136) isolation is directly linked to living conditions, "[l]iving in dilapidated accommodation on an 'undesirable' estate increases the problems of isolation and reinforces the sense of hopelessness faced by many lone parents". Allan and Crow also argue that "the circumstances of many lone mothers… can lead to a high level of social isolation" (2001: 143). However, they note a wide variation in the experience of isolation, even when individuals may be living in similar

circumstances:

> "Some [lone mothers] are extremely isolated and feel very alone. They have few friends and relatively little support from family. For them, the home can become a prison. Others, though, are happy to be relatively inactive socially and do not experience this as oppressive. For whatever reason, they do not feel lonely but derive satisfaction from their apparently limited domestic and familial environment. Still others, while being in a similar material position, are able to use their resources to construct a much more active social life with friends and wider family" (Allan and Crow 2001: 143)

In the accounts of the interviewees the existence of social networks emerged in ways that both support the findings of Bell and Ribbens and supply some answers to the questions they raise. The experiences of some lone mothers reflected the "high level" of social isolation that Allan and Crow identify, while a few women seemed satisfied with a limited social network. A closer examination of interview data enables us to begin to explain the variations in the experiences of isolation for the women interviewed. One important factor in the experience of isolation was the status of the lone mothers as an 'insider', someone who had grown up on the estate, or as 'outsider', a women who had been moved there because of the supply of available social housing. Changes in housing policy in the 1980s and 1990s mean local authorities cannot give priority to lone parents to be housed near family and friends (Land 1999: 134). To generalise, it appeared that the outsiders reported feeling more socially isolated than the insiders, though this relationship didn't always work in a straightforward way and sometimes interacted with other factors, such as age.

Fiona, aged 27, is an 'outsider' on the estate, having moved to the area when her child, who is now two years old, was a baby. She talked about feeling "really lonely" and only having one friend in the local area, who is also an 'outsider'. Fiona reported finding it difficult to make friends with local women and described the experiences of her friend,

> Fiona: no one would talk to her for ages, she felt really, you know, closed in and that and then I moved in and starting chatting to her and that and she started telling me that no one - you know - just because she weren't from the area

Fiona had similar experiences and described how difficult she finds this:

> "it is hard because I'm a really bubbly person, really friendly and that and I think they think you shouldn't go over and talk to them [other women, at playgroups], they think she's a bit mad, why's she talking to me, you know? ...[A]nd I'm not used to that, I'm used to being friendly, not being closed"

The experience of isolation for these two 'outsiders' and the difficulties in making friends might suggest that mothers without family nearby are likely to be more isolated (see Phoenix 1991). However, it did not always appear to be the case that contact with family was experienced as integrating in some way, or that it facilitated the making of wider social contacts, or that it took the lone mother out of the home. This is the case for Rebecca. She is 17 years old and grew up in an area next to the estate. In her account, Rebecca's grandmother emerges as the person who gives her most support; she has lent Rebecca money and sometimes brings her food, and visits regularly,

> Rebecca: my Nan comes up and she sits and plays with him while I tidy up... well Monday, Wednesday, Friday she comes up and helps, so it's not too bad

Although this is an important source of adult company and help for Rebecca, it also seems to further confine her to her home in which she already spends a great deal of time. All in all Rebecca's story is rather bleak: she has substantial debts, does not have a good relationship with her neighbours, and reports that there have been several attempts to break into her flat. In addition to this she has a sense of long-term confinement in a flat that she doesn't like:

> EH: so do you want to move out?
> Rebecca: I won't ever get out, never ever, if I had another baby - I'd have to have another two babies to get out of here, but nobody wants one of these... nobody will want to come here, I wouldn't have thought
> EH: so do you think you will be living here till [your son] is grown up?
> Rebecca: probably - until I can get my own place I will be living here, they will never move me now

Rebecca's account conveys the sense of the captive, imprisoned mother, as discussed in the work of Gavron (1966).

Other women, both 'outsiders' and 'insiders' reported sometimes experiencing their homes and being alone with their children as oppressive. Helen puts this

simply:

> EH: do you go out everyday?
> Helen: yeah, I can't stay in

Kate, who has one child in school full time and one aged two, gives a similar account:

> EH: what sort of things do you do during the day?
> Kate: playgroups
> EH: what ones do you go to?
> Kate: I go to the Monday group, Tuesday [her youngest child] goes to the childminders, Wednesday I go to computers at the nursery, Thursday [her youngest child] goes to playgroup and Friday we goes to computers and we go to Friday drop-in down the centre. So everyday I'm doing something, because I can't stay in, I find it hard to stay in with them to be honest
> EH: for what reason?
> Kate: I find him hard work, at least when he's at playgroup, he's mixing, I'm mixing. I just find it boring, sat in, the both of us together... he goes and mixes with other children which he finds hard anyway and I find it easier, like having a normal conversation with someone, talking about the same things, that don't make you feel so isolated

Like Kate, a number of women noted the importance of the local services for children in enabling them to get out of the house and to decrease their feelings of isolation and boredom (see chapter ten). However, as discussed in the story of Fiona (above), this strategy was more successful for some women, often the 'insiders', than others. This division of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' may form part of the answer to Bell and Ribbens questions about the selection of women by other women for sociability and the basis for exclusion from social networks.

For Donna, the white mother of mixed race children, home and exclusion from adult company were experienced in contradictory ways. As discussed above, Donna's plans to get her house sorted represented a new settled and stable phase of her family's life. Donna also talked about the oppressive nature of her home:

> Donna: at home it's boring, I know I've got my kids but it's nice to go out and meet people and meet different people, you can't do that at home – *just feels like you're locked in and you can't do nothing*, it's like hard to go out when you got no money, because you can't go out nowhere with your kids when you've got no money, because they always want something

However, for Donna home is both a trap and an escape. Donna is an 'outsider' in

the area, but doubly so on the basis of the ethnicity of her children. In an area where only 3% of the population are from an ethnic minority background (Urban II 2000: 18), Donna is 'racialised' as the mother of mixed race children (Alibhai-Brown 2002, Olumide 2002), and this is something that she recognises,

> Donna: if they have got something to gossip about, you'll be the one and where I've got mixed race children... I stand out a lot, I even caught some of them saying in the shop – they were chatting about black people and they were saying horrible things, and as soon as I come in they stopped and I says, "oh carry on if you've got something to say, don't stop because of me"

For Donna, home can be a refuge from the hostile reception she sometimes faces on the estate,

> Donna: sometimes we have days when I say okay, we're having no one round, we sits down, we close the curtains like it's in the cinema and we gets a quilt and sit on the sofa and watch a film like this (the television is on in the background) because they like things like this

So, for Donna, home can also be a protected space for her and her children.

Partners, family and friends

In the second half of this chapter the focus shifts from the experience of home to the relationships lone mothers have with partners, kin and friends. As discussed above, some research literature and some social policy tends to assume that lone mothers are isolated and socially excluded, hence the supposed socially including effects of paid work according to the NDLP. In this half of the chapter the social worlds of the lone mothers are considered again to look at the degree of isolation and social exclusion experienced.

Lone mothers and their partners or ex-partners

Changes in the nature of personal/intimate relationships between adults have been dominant in the concerns of family sociology over the last decade, particularly in the work of Giddens and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim. Giddens (1992) has documented the rise of the pure relationship, as marriage and long-term

relationships move from an economic basis to prioritising emotional fulfilment. Like Giddens, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) look at love in terms of adult relationships but also consider the love of children (Neale and Smart 1999: 14, 16). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim have argued that as marriage and cohabiting relationships become more fragile, bonds between adults and children may be emphasised and conceptualised as providing permanence and greater satisfaction, which can be difficult to derive from adult relationships (Neale and Smart 1999: 14-15, Beck and Beck Gernsheim 1995). The accounts of lone mothers present a complex experiences of relationships, where lone parenting is sometimes seen as less problematic than parenting when part of a couple and in this way lends some support to the ideas of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim. In chapter one, I argued that lone mother research has tended to overlook the personal relationships of lone mothers. In the following section I look at the relationships lone mothers are involved in and how lone mothering is experienced in the context of previous or ongoing intimate relationships.

Relationships and living arrangements

Three of the interviewees had been married and two of these women were now lone mothers as a result of a separation or divorce, the third had her child in a subsequent relationship that had since ended. These women were all older women in the sample, aged 28, 31 and 37. In two of the interviews it was not clear if the interviewee was in a relationship. Nine of the women said they were not currently in a relationship. In eight of the interviews the mothers reported that they were in a relationship and some of these women said they lived with their partner some of the time. Laura, divorced from the father of her child, talked about her relationship with her new partner,

> Laura: he does stay here a lot, but then at other times he goes through stages where he'll go and stay back at his flat, or we'll go and stay at his flat, but I find it a lot harder sometimes when he is staying here on a nightly basis, he works away so I am quite relieved sometimes when he is working away or working nights

When not staying at her house, Laura's partner would stay at his mother's or at his own flat. Other interviewees also mentioned these part time living arrangement with men who would spend part of the time at their home, and then part of their

time with other female kin. Rebecca had formerly lived full time with her partner but now lived mostly alone with her son, she described her partner's living arrangements,

> Rebecca: he lives with his Nan, well he seems to have arguments with his Nan and lives with his mum and arguments with his mum and then goes with his Nan, whichever one suits him I think, at the time

I asked Rebecca to compare living with her partner previously to their current situation,

> Rebecca: sometimes it was more difficult because he's messy and he's lazy, but then when he was here I could go and have a bath on my own, while he watched him for five minutes, but what got on my nerves – he didn't do anything, he was lazy
> EH: he didn't do any housework?
> Rebecca: no, and he made more mess, more washing up, ate more

Rebecca speaks positively of living with her partner in terms of being able to share childcare, even if only for short periods. But she also draws attention to the down side of living together that a number of other interviewees mentioned, the increase in domestic labour that men bring with them, which increases the workload for the lone mother. This is also shown clearly in the interview with Tina. I asked her if she was still in a relationship with the father of her son,

> Tina: yeah, we are but he don't live here because he lives with his mum and they live in Hartcliffe because it is just too much to live together and he does come up or we go down, but it is too much to live together. We tried it and we lasted about three weeks and there was too many arguments, he was messy and I was clearing up after him, so he has gone back down to his mum and it is better, he works during the day and then we just see each other on the night time

So the domestic labour that Tina's partner brought with him to her flat, washing his work clothes, cleaning the bath after him and cooking his evening meal has been sent back to his mother. This means that Tina now gets to spend time with her partner and her child without the additional housework and they have fewer arguments.

A few interviewees talked about the difficulties of living with men in terms of the emotional work this entails,

> Elaine: ...there is no bloke here (laughs) because they are worse... they are huge, big, demanding, well the men I have met anyway, huge, big, demanding children that have tantrums. That is probably my warped view of life but that is what I think (laughs)...
> EH: but is anything easier being on your own? What particular things -
> Elaine: well, that's what I said, you don't have the emotional demands, I couldn't have a relationship at the moment because I think it would just be too demanding, I just would not have time

Kate explained her lone mother status in a similar way and thinks that to live without a partner is best for her children,

> Kate: I did live with [oldest son's] dad for six months but that was not here and I couldn't handle it, I couldn't feel my own space. I just needed my own space so I could concentrate on more with them, I find it easier to be on my own, to be honest. I do get lonely but the experience I've had with men hasn't been very nice so I think I'm doing them [her children] a favour, do you know what I mean, being on my own with them

Other women talked of finding relationships difficult as contrasting parenting styles or even just the presence of another adult in the home can make relationships with children more difficult to manage. Melissa, separated from husband expresses some of these feelings,

> Melissa: I am very mother orientated, I don't like to smack, I like to tell off, you know about the right things. When [her husband] used to tell my kids off I would get on the defence straight away, hated it, I had quite a bad upbringing anyway so for my children I just want it all good, so since we have split up it is good for me in a way

Isabelle also talks about the difficulties of parenting when her partner is around,

> Isabelle: her behaviour is a hell of a lot easier when he isn't there, because although she isn't... when he's there it's always, "well my daddy will do this and my daddy will do that", at the moment she has got such an attitude about her and she's really trying to hurt you with the things that she is saying

Zoe's story, of the arguments between her son, Josh, and her boyfriend, are perhaps the most extreme example of difficulties with parenting with another adult present,

> EH: and are there any bad things about being on your own with Josh?
> Zoe: no, no, because when my boyfriend is there he winds Josh up and Josh winds my boyfriend up and then I'm in the middle saying "shut up" and "shut up" and they both comes back to me and my boyfriend's saying, "oh what the fuck are you shouting at me for?" and Josh goes "yeah ma, for fucks sake", and runs upstairs and

I'm like "get out of here, don't fucking swear at me", and then he is like "sorry" and my boyfriend is like "it isn't my fault". Josh says, "he started it, not me" and my boyfriend goes "oh shut up Josh" and he says, "shut up fat arse" and I just sits there like that (head in her hands) and I think, "go for a fag..."

Money matters

A few of the women currently in relationships mentioned the financial help given to them by their partners. Usually this was in the form of their partner buying goods for their child(ren),

Yvonne: I found out I was pregnant and then my partner was working anyway, but I felt, like I always have felt, like he supports me, he buys my fags and he'll buy my clothes and he'll buy my trainers when I need them, whatever, he buys all the baby's stuff

Paula: see, my friend works in a clothes shop so I get a discount on clothes for myself and like I said his dad helps out with whatever I need for him, he buys nappies and wet wipes and that so I don't really want for nothing really

For other women in relationships the lack of money being contributed by men to the household was a source of conflict. This is an ongoing theme in Isabelle's relationship with the father of their child. I asked how she was managing for money when their baby, now five years old, was first born and they all moved into a new flat together,

EH: so how were you getting money - income support?
Isabelle: yeah, the thing with me and my boyfriend, I was always having to claim benefit for myself and people will say, "yeah, you done it fraudulently", but at the end of the day if I didn't have that money coming in for myself... I mean the money he was getting weren't getting spent on what it should have been getting spent on, it was getting spent down the pub, you know...
EH: so you were claiming as if you were on your own?
Isabelle: yeah
EH: and then -
Isabelle: and after about nine months or so, I ended up, big barney - kicked him out and he came back and we went legal and done it just on his money and then ended up having to go on income support because it just wasn't happening, rent arrears and all the rest of it... it was worse when it came down to the fact that I was left with rent arrears, with his debts

A few years later, at the time of our interview, Isabelle's problems with money are continuing,

EH: and tell me about money then, how do you manage now?
Isabelle: income support, and he gets twice as much money as I do and I'm lucky if I gets a tenner out of it

EH: and how does he justify that?
Isabelle: pass next question, I'd like to know how he justifies it himself, to be quite honest, well I actually - because he usually goes out and spends his money on beer and that, I actually, reversed it a bit this week and with my money I went out and blew it and I was left with £10, you know, so at the end of the day, he has to get food this week, otherwise there isn't going to be none, and he knows that so he has to do something about it, I think before it was a case of he knows I get the food so he just blows his money on whatever

Sharon is the mother of two children and sometimes lives with her partner,

Sharon: he's not really living with me as such, just now and again – whenever his mum don't let him stay with her

They have been together since half way through her first pregnancy and he is the father of her second child. She was the only mother to explicitly assert her lone mother status despite the "now and again" presence of her partner,

EH: I was going to say, how was it having the baby on your own, but you maybe had him there as well?
Sharon: well he is like, really I still class myself as like being a single mum, because he's not working, he don't help or anything like that…
EH: do you share money with your boyfriend?
Sharon: he sometimes has it off me, but other than that, no
EH: so who buys stuff for the house?
Sharon: me, I do

In Sharon's terms, for her partner to really count as a partner and a father he would have to contribute money and labour to the household, which at the present he doesn't do.

As discussed in chapter eight, all of the interviewees planned to be in paid work sometime in the future. None of the women talked about the future in terms of financial dependence on a partner as an alternative to their own participation in paid work, even though all but two of the interviewees (Elaine and Zoe), hoped to live with a partner in the future. Perhaps this is not surprising in an area where much of the employment available is low paid (see appendix II). In addition to this, the comments from Sharon and Isabelle, above, show that some of the interviewees had already experienced the pitfalls of economic dependence on an unreliable partner.

Family, friends and social networks

In the last section of this chapter I consider the lone mothers' relationships with family and friends, a topic that has been touched upon earlier in this chapter and in chapter seven. I asked all the interviewees, "who are the important people in their life at the moment?" All of the interviewees mentioned their child(ren). Two of the women mentioned her partner. Female kin, usually mothers or grandmothers were most frequently mentioned, after children.

> EH: who would you say are the important people in your life?
> Yvonne: as in I depend on?
> EH: well anything really
> Yvonne: my most solid person is my ma

For a few of the younger interviewees, having a child had ushered in a new phase in their relationship with their family. This was the case for Yvonne and for Zoe, who had been in foster care for during her teenage years, she commented,

> Zoe: after I had the baby she's [her mother] been there for me, but before I had the baby she wasn't never there
>
> EH: do you see your mum a lot still?
> Yvonne: I takes him up there every single day, before I go to crèche or after I go to crèche, and when I haven't got crèche on a Tuesday and a Thursday, we are up there all day. Me and my ma, since I moved out (after the birth of her child), we have become a lot more closer, and it is better for him [her son] as well because he loves my ma

Family members were cited as important sources of support in a number of ways, for childcare, help with housework, shopping and financially, as well as the less tangible social support, friendship and love. A number of women had bought furniture with help from loans or gifts from family members. Some lone mothers had groceries bought for them,

> EH: do you feel like you or your children have to go without anything?
> Sharon: if I just relied on my benefits then yeah, but my parents and my boyfriend's parents, they help us out a lot
> EH: do they buy things, or give you money?
> Sharon: they used to always buy my nappies and things like that, but now they buy my washing powder and on a Friday buy like the six pints of milk and loads of other things

> Rebecca: my Nan will bring me things she don't want, like if she bought something and she didn't like it or if she bought one and got one free she'll give me one

For a number of households, family help was important to buy essential goods that could not be afforded on income support alone.

A few of the women mentioned issues around money that were causing problems with their family or the family of their partner. For Rebecca, this was because of involvement with the Child Support Agency (CSA), who were now pursuing her and her partner for money. This was causing problems for Rebecca with the family of her partner, as they were critical of her for giving information to the CSA. Laura talked about recent arguments with her mother caused by problems with payment from her last job, leading her mother to withdraw the childcare she had been providing.

Many of the 'insiders' had family members living nearby, and for some the family of their partner also lived locally. For these women, family members were an important source of help, support and care in more general terms. A number of the interviewees visited a family member frequently, sometimes daily, as Yvonne states, above. A number of women talked about the caring responsibilities that they had for other family members; these extra caring responsibilities are similar to the findings of Innes and Scott, who also conducted their research in an area of long-term deprivation (2003: 6). Sharon has a busy schedule as her two children attend different schools at opposite ends of the estate,

> Sharon: well my eldest goes to school at nine, I go home, get my youngest dressed, and she goes to school at one o'clock and then I pick my eldest up at three o'clock and then I pick my youngest at five

Additionally she visits her grandparents every other day and helps them,

> Sharon: well my Nan can't hardly walk and my granddad can but he's got arthritis and stuff, I go to the shops for them and I do a lot of housework for her

Joanne is also heavily involved in looking after her family, her younger brother lives with her and in the past she has cared for the baby of her older sister, as well

as looking after her own two children. She succinctly explains her role in the family,

> Joanne: I'm the brick person, you know what I mean, if I shattered everyone would be gone, you know what I mean

To understand the position of these lone mothers who see family members frequently the concept of social exclusion does not seem to have much meaning. These women reported that they did speak to another adult everyday and did not wish they had a wider circle of friends. Some of the lone mothers are involved in so much caring work that it might be difficult for them to undertake this in combination with paid employment. An example of this is in chapter seven, when Beth talks about leaving paid work to care to for her grandmother.

Other lone mothers did report experiencing feelings of isolation; this was particularly the case for younger mothers who were outsiders in the area. As discussed above, Gail talked about having only a couple of friends who live in the area, other mums that she has met at playgroups. Fiona says that she has only one friend in the area and remarks, "it's bad, isn't it?" Poor transport connections and lack of money exacerbate their situation, as it can be an expensive and long journey to visit relatives and friends who live outside of the estate. A few of the older mothers reported problems with their friends, based on feeling different. Ann, who identifies herself as from a middle class background, felt that she doesn't have real friends on the estate, who have shared her life experiences, such as travelling and going to University. A couple of mothers felt out of time with the usual patterns of childrearing as they had their child(ren) later in life than their friends. This made meeting up and going out with friends difficult; as the mothers of toddlers they had childcare problems that their friends, mothers of teenagers did not face; this was Beth's experience,

> EH: Do you have friends round here or is it mostly your family that you see?
> Beth: Mostly family because my friends sort of dwindled when I had [her son] because they all had teenagers and they were looking for jobs

Conclusion

The home is the site where much of the lone mothers' caring labour is carried out, but has been neglected in the research literature. Here, the importance of creating a decent home, as part of a symbol of a transition to a new stage of life has been discussed. On television, particularly during the day, much programming features the buying, selling and decorating of homes and it may be that these images of a decent home add to the need lone mothers feel to 'get their houses sorted'. The neglect of the place of home in the lives of lone mothers might reflect the fact that policy makers and researchers often have a decent home. It also takes us back to Bauman's points about the importance of space for the 'workless'. This discussion has also suggested the work that lone mothers have to put into creating a decent home, means the definition of unpaid work should be broadened again, to account for the difficulties of doing this when living on a low income. Home is an important location in the social worlds of lone mothers that could be researched more fully.

This chapter has also provided data on the intimate relationships of lone mothers, another element of the social worlds of lone mothers that has been neglected. In terms of relationships with male partners, a few of the interview accounts revealed some interesting living arrangements, particularly in the case of the lone mothers whose partners lived with them part time and with other female kin at other times. The accounts of some of the interviewees here have challenged the idea of the isolated and socially excluded lone mother, with reference to the support they receive, particularly from female kin - although, as discussed, this may be the case for insiders more frequently than outsiders on the estate. In the next chapter, I consider the role of training in the lives of lone mothers, and argue that this can be an important source of community-based inclusion or activity for some of the interviewees.

Chapter ten

The importance of training

The high level of involvement in training was an unanticipated finding. Like the lack of involvement in paid work, this may have been a consequence of how the sample was recruited – mainly from children's centre where training courses for parents are held or information about them was offered, however the data suggests this was not the sole reason. 13 of the interviewees were currently participating in some kind of training or had completed a course since the birth of their child(ren). Seven of these were courses in childcare. In this chapter I discuss the range of training courses the interviewees were involved in and explore the meanings and functions of training for lone mothers and look specifically at participation in childcare courses.

Childcare courses

In this section I explore the apparent popularity of childcare courses and explore the meanings and functions of training courses for the women who engage in them. One of the centres I visited to recruit interviewees were running a crèche workers course, and this was where six women were participating in childcare training. This centre was open three days a week and ran a crèche to look after the children, so the resources for the course where already in place. One of the interviewees, Tina, had been instrumental in getting the course put on,

> EH: and why did you do the crèche course?
> Tina: because I thought I could take him - I was so fed up, I still am now, being on income support and it's not much money - one day I was thinking and I went to speak to [a worker at the group]. He's only 15 months now, and so to have to wait for him to be at school all day, he would be four, so that meant I would have to stay on income support till he was four and I couldn't do that, so the only way out of it really was to do the crèche course, so we spoke to [the group leader] and to some of the other girls, and then we decided to do it

Tina's thinks that mothers should be with their children during the pre-school years and so the only way to combine this with paid work is to work in a childcare setting where her child is also present. Paula also saw childcare as a way to

combine mothering and paid work and made the following comment when I asked her about returning to paid work,

> Paula: ...I do want to go back to work but obviously I don't want to be going back into work now and be missing the first things he is doing now - so I'd rather wait till he is in school, but because we have done the crèche course, [the group leader] has said she would employ us to work in the crèche. So that way he is with me anyway, so I haven't got to go and ask someone to look after him because I've got to go to work because he is there with me, it doesn't matter, and she said that you could bring them [their children] along

The importance of seeing the 'firsts' of their child's development was a theme common to a number of accounts, as seen in chapter eight. Paula's comment shows that the combining of mothering and caring has been sanctioned by the leader of the group which she attends and where she plans to work. It is not clear whether this arrangement would be accepted in other crèches or childcare settings and how common this practice is. This is an important point as it may be that in wanting to combine paid work and mothering, these mothers will be limited to this crèche as their workplace. Like Tina and Paula, Yvonne plans to work in the area of childcare once she has completed the crèche workers course. After finishing secondary school Yvonne had begun a childcare course at college, but left after two weeks as she felt she was being treated like a school child by the tutors. Yvonne shares the feeling of wanting to be in a workplace where her son is present but also emphasises feelings of responsibility to the family finances as part of her motivation for doing training,

> EH: and you'd be happy to have the baby and be at work?
> Yvonne: that's why I did the crèche course, like I said I wanted to work because I feels it's out of order, because I can't contribute to the family, [her boyfriend] has to contribute towards it all and I feel selfish for not contributing towards anything. So I want to work, but I couldn't work unless I found someone to look after him, whereas now, the crèche course has come along - I could take [son] into the crèche with me, so I could work and look after my own son at the same time

Yvonne's strong sense of a responsibility to contribute to the family finances via paid work has been referred to earlier, she was one of the mothers who began work once she discovered she was pregnant for these same reasons.

Sharon, Rebecca and Isabelle were also members of this group running the crèche workers course and decided to participate. However, their accounts reveal

varying levels of attachment to the idea of childcare as a future career and some of the functions that training has. Sharon's entry to the course was opportunistic,

> EH: so you are doing the crèche course - was that just because it going on, or you wanted to?
> Sharon: well, before that I didn't come here, I used to see [the group leader] about a lot and one of the people here and she'd say "oh come along" and I never used to have the time, and then I just come up one day and it was happening the week after so...

Isabelle explains that she did the course because "it was on but I wanted to do it as well". Rebecca was keen to stress that despite doing the training, childcare would not be her choice of job,

> Rebecca: ...we've just finished a course...
> EH: what course was that?
> Rebecca: crèche care worker, I don't want to do that mind, I just did it because they were doing it, I just did it, so -
> EH: just to have something to do, or because everyone else was doing it?
> Rebecca: they were running the course out there, and they said, "who wants to do it?" And everyone was doing it so I thought, "well" - any course they arrange out there we all do it anyway, all different courses, we just do them all - just so if we did apply for a job we have certificates saying that

For Rebecca, who left school before taking her GCSEs, the childcare course and other courses put on by the group are a way of gaining some qualifications, which she perceives will strengthen her application when applying for jobs. Melissa had completed a childcare course at another centre in the area, which she did when her children were both pre-school age. Like Rebecca, Melissa does not plan to work in the area of childcare,

> Melissa: well I always wanted to work with children until I had my own, I love children, I love babies, they are like ohhh, but no, its nice to give them back now, I don't think I would ever do it

It is important that policy makers and planners appreciate the range of reasons for undertaking training courses, perhaps especially in this area of childcare. As we have seen from the stories above, training can be embarked on for a number of reasons and is not necessarily entered into because women plan to enter a job in that area. There is a shortage of childcare workers in the Hartcliffe area, but the accounts of Isabelle, Melissa and Rebecca suggest that the apparent popularity of

these childcare courses should not be taken as evidence that new childcare workers will shortly be available. Of the women who do want to work in the childcare field, it seems this is premised on being able to look after their own child(ren) while at the same time looking after the children of others. The lone mothers are combining the two forms of caring that have been constructed differently in government policy; the looking after of their own children, which is non-work, and the looking after of other people's children, which is work, although the activities that they both entail are essentially the same. As was seen in chapter seven, some interviewees concurred with this distinction and argued that housework and caring for your own children should not be seen as work. However, as has been noted a recurring theme in the interview accounts is the importance of full time mothering during babyhood and early childhood. The employment of mothers in a crèche attended by their own children is a creative solution to the 'problem' of the 'worklessness' of these lone mothers, enabling them to 'work' and be 'full time' mothers. This shows the agency of lone mothers, rather than constructing them as passively accepting the implications of government policy.

The apparent popularity of childcare courses at this and on other sites on the estate should not be interpreted as tapping into the desires of women wanting to work as childcarers. There is a danger that the availability of childcare courses could become self-perpetuating, that high uptake is noted and understood as meaning more childcare courses should be provided. As Rebecca's account reflects, some women take up whatever course is on offer. The implication of this is that a wide variety of courses should be held or at least information about them provided to present a range of options to women attending these centres. Thus these centres would have the most chance of engaging those women who are far from entering paid work and have very vague ideas about what training or jobs they could do. A narrow range of courses may mean that women are directed into jobs that have been deemed appropriate for mothers, i.e. childcare, and further reinforce the idea that childcare is 'women's work'.

The popularity of training based in children's centres emphasises that this is an

important way to reach the mothers of young children. In this way, the Sure Start target of decreasing the percentage of workless households in Sure Start areas begins to make sense. But in the lives of the lone mothers represented here, the target would be better placed if focussed on facilitating the training and learning of mothers. In the timetables of these lone mothers the pre-school years are mostly seen as a time when it is appropriate to participate in training, but not to enter paid work, which is anticipated as having a greater impact on their lives. A policy target centred on paid work overrides the timetables or rationalities of lone mothers, may put resources where they are largely not wanted and is ultimately destined to not be met.

Getting access to information

In support of the importance of training based in children's centres, some of the interviewees referred to a worker or a centre as a point of contact when asked where they would get information on jobs or training:

> EH: and who would you go to get advice, you said about choosing an NVQ?
> Fiona: oh, I'd go down and see [a local worker at a centre], I don't know her other name, I'd go and see her
> EH: and is that part of her job to sort out those kind of things?
> Fiona: yeah, yeah
> EH: is she easy to talk to?
> Fiona: she's a really nice girl actually
>
> EH: so you are doing various courses - how did you manage to get on them, who gives you advice?
> Kate: my health visitor and when you've just taken your children into the nursery there's always signs up [about courses] and [a worker there] down there is quite good, she's always telling you about new things
>
> EH: so how do you think you'd get help to get back to work? Is there anyone you'd talk to to get advice?
> Gail: well I'd probably go down to the advice centre and speak to the Sure Start counsellor [an advice worker]. I've spoken to her a few times, so I'd probably go and see her, see what she reckons
> EH: so you wouldn't think of going to like a job centre, you'd probably just go to her?
> Gail: probably, more of an informal approach, because I know her and she'd probably be able to explain things a bit more

We have seen that some of the interviewees had access to information about job vacancies via family or friendship networks (see chapter five). The importance of local workers is mentioned by four other interviewees and shows that on this estate these lone mothers do have access to information and advice on training.

The services that they use with their children provide them with opportunities to find out about in-work benefits, training courses and childcare provision. One justification for the compulsory interview element of the New Deal for Lone Parents has been that lone mothers lack access to the necessary information on these subjects. Duncan and Barlow (2000) argue that this is a 'rationality mistake' made in policy here. By adopting a neo-classical approach to rationality, New Labour assume that once in possession of the necessary information (including the knowledge that paid work pays more than income support) lone mothers will (re)enter employment. However, this ignores lone mothers own gendered moral rationalities of the appropriate relationship between paid work and motherhood. The evidence here supports Duncan and Barlow, suggesting that at least some of these lone mothers do have access to information and in some cases to networks that could provide job opportunities, but are not entering paid work for other reasons. These women have their own timetables of when it is appropriate to begin training and when they will enter paid work and these are not made in reference to information about employment but reflect their values and attitudes on motherhood and childrearing and the wider realities of their lives.

The benefits of training

'I'll have something behind me'

The recommendation for a cautious approach towards the apparent popularity of childcare courses should not be taken to be promoting a purely instrumental approach to training, to indicate that it is only worthwhile if it leads the participant to a job in that field. Many of the interviewees had been involved in courses that they did not plan to pursue in the workplace, but still talked about training in positive terms. Claire's account is particularly useful to illustrate some of these themes. Claire was working in a full time job in administration and finance when she became pregnant. She decided not to return to her job once her baby had been born, a decision she firstly presents in financial terms,

> Claire: I was doing administration and finance and I was dealing with the payroll as well. It was a lot of responsibility for a low paid job, it was. So I didn't really want

> to go back, and knowing that I had to support a child on £116 a week, because that was the basic, and then I had travelling expenses on top of that - so I was only really earning about £100 for me and my son. I mean we were getting that more or less on benefits so there was no incentive for me to actually do it, because I was no better off for doing it

Claire adds that problems with childcare were also a factor in her decision and explains that the difficulties in returning to paid work led her to embark on what could be termed her *training career,*

> EH: You didn't keep your job open then?
> Claire: no, I decided not to go back and that, you know and then there was childcare issues and that, because I didn't know of anywhere at that time where I could get childcare help and everything.[18] So then from there, I decided to get myself involved into doing courses and training – so I've been doing that for about three or four years

Claire has completed a number of courses in this time, she names a few of them,

> Claire: ...all my training – Woman, Job or Career, Working in the Community, all the courses... I've also done like other bits – like the Home Energy Efficiency course, so I could go and like advise people on home energy efficiency, as like an opening you know what I mean? I did - I really opened up all my - what can I say? My options I would say, it opened my options more that anything with my training really

After doing these courses, aided by much support from the centres where they were based, Claire was about to begin a part time job and was continuing with training –

> Claire: I'm hoping to get my qualification for my computers anyway, for my City and Guilds stage one – I'm hoping to get that
> EH: oh right, have you started that?
> Claire: I'm halfway through, I've already done the word processing and I'm on the databases now. I mean I think my end goal, I would like to be some sort of development worker or, I'd like to be an outreach worker of some sort. I would quite enjoy doing something like that you know, I think that would be like my end goal of all it you know

After participating in training for three or four years, Claire's ambitions with regard paid work have changed. Her new job is an administration and finance role so is similar to her employment before her son was born, however she will be employed by a community group and her focus has shifted to an ultimate aim of

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[18] Claire subsequently got information on childcare services from a children's centre where she was doing a training course.

involvement in outreach work. Claire talks about training that is not going to be directly relevant in her new job in positive terms, saying, "it opened my options really". Other women also talked about training in a similar way, and also emphasised that it would mean they had qualifications so that once the time was right, when their child was in full time school, they could enter paid work,

> Gail: in September I might do an NVQ in computers – so just trying to benefit myself by getting more qualifications so when I do go back to work *I'll have something behind me*, sort of thing

Helen, whose children are aged two years old and six months old, plans to begin a one year hairdressing course but then will have gap before she enters the labour market,

> Helen: …see I won't do it [paid hairdressing work] when they are at home though, I'll just do family and all that, because obviously it's taking them with me - because she's going to nursery in September but [the younger child] I'll still have her for another two years, but *I'll still have that behind me when I go*

Like Claire, Kate has also has participated in a number of courses,

> Kate: I've signed up for a college course
> EH: when's that going to -
> Kate: I signed up over the nursery for over at the college and I'm doing one at the moment, that's finished now but I'm doing the CLAIT one in September down the nursery as well and I've done my - when I was pregnant with [youngest] - I done a playcare course and I got my first aid
> EH: was that at [the children's centre]?
> Kate: yeah and I've got my childcare and my food hygiene, I likes doing things like that because I think when they're older I'm not always going be sat in, so *the more I got behind me to back me up, the better*

Joanne, whose children are aged four years and two years, has not yet participated in any training, but has signed up for a computer course –

> EH: you were saying about starting work when your children are a certain age -
> Joanne: yeah I would rather like go to college and *get something behind me*, you know what I mean, and actually have the qualifications to be able to do something, then go out and get the job

These extracts show the interviewees expressing a value in training in itself, sometimes when they are not planning to continue with the course under discussion. Training during the pre-school years of their children's lives may be

particularly important for women with no or low education qualifications, as is the case for most of the women in my sample. Training is valued as providing opportunities and the interviewees anticipate that it will make the transition to paid work easier. Gail, Helen, Kate and Joanne also present training as a resource for their future entry to paid work, saying that training is 'something behind me'. This importance placed on training, even in a subject that will not to be pursued in paid work comes in contrast to the work-first approach of the NDLP, which promotes a quick entry to the labour market rather than a human capital, training-centred approach. The NDLP target group encompasses all lone parents with dependent children and from April 2004 attendance at a work-focussed interviews will be compulsory for all lone parents, including those with children under five years old. This policy change will put the work-focussed interviews out of time in the lives of these lone mothers. The majority of interviewees conceptualised the pre-school years as a time of participation in training, not in paid work. Here employment policy will be acting outside of the timetables of lone mothers. A job centre based work-focussed interview for these lone mothers of pre-school children will be remote from their lives in two ways. Firstly in terms of values, the time at which it is appropriate to enter paid work; and secondly by place, where information about paid work and training is obtained. For most of these women this is from children's centres and the workers based in them.

Gaining confidence and 'doing something'

As well as getting qualifications behind them, the interviewees referred to other benefits of training. Kate's participation in a number of courses is noted above and her enthusiasm for learning about computers is clear,

> EH: have you liked any of the courses you've done?
>
> Kate: the computer one... I really do like the computers, I think that is one thing I just cannot wait to start going to, I really do enjoy it... doing all these courses it just builds your confidence up – even if you are not going to use them, you've got something out of them

Later on in the interview, Kate talks about learning again,

> Kate: that's why I do courses - because I don't go to work, that's why I do courses to be honest - because I find it so boring to be at home, so it is better to go out and do courses, because at least you are doing something – you aren't sitting down doing

> nothing. Because what I'd like to do, to be honest, do you know those Sure Start link workers? I would like, if I had the confidence, which I know I haven't at the moment, but I would like to be one of them. Because I know what it is like to be sat at home, too scared to go to the playgroup, do you know what I mean, because that is really hard – just to walk into that playgroup and I would like to show people round, that is what I'd really like

Kate began a relationship with the father of her oldest child whilst she was at school, she comments, "I just had wrong start in life, he was the person – I shouldn't have met – he just dragged me down with him". After gaining a few low grade GCSEs, Kate fell pregnant but then suffered a miscarriage. She then felt "desperate" for a baby and had her oldest child when she was 18. Kate suffered severe postnatal depression and her son lived with her mother for two years, with Kate visiting daily. At the time of the interview it had been a year since Kate had last taken anti-depressants, "I think that is the first time I have been off them for a long time". In the context of her background, it is clear why Kate remarks that courses have been a way to build her confidence, and have been important for her to slowly develop the ambition of being a Sure Start link worker. This gradual process of building up confidence via training courses may eventually lead Kate back to paid work. For women in similar positions to Kate, a scheme aimed at accelerating this entry to paid work, such as the NDLP, might not be able to provide the gradual build up of confidence that participation in a range of training courses have given her.

In the extract above, Kate says that she finds being at home boring so attendance at playgroups and training courses help her feel she is "doing something". Kate's feelings about staying at home are linked to her son's recent diagnosis with special needs, which leads her to comment –

> Kate: I find him hard work, at least when he's at playgroup, he's mixing, I'm mixing I just find it boring, sat in, the both of us together

Kate attends a playgroup or training course every week day and talks powerfully about how important these groups are to her, they give her identity as a person, unlike her home life where she is defined in relation to her children,

> EH: is it [going to groups] important for both of you?
> Kate: yeah, it is for him because he goes and mixes with other children which he

> finds hard anyway and I find it easier, like having a normal conversation with someone, talking about the same things, that don't make you feel so isolated, being on your own. It's like "oh mine had me up all last night", "oh and mine did", it's like you're human, do you know what I mean? You don't feel like a mum, I feel like Kate when I go to playgroup, so I do find it quite good

Other women also talked about training in terms of giving them something to do, with the implication that to be 'at home' is to be doing nothing,

> EH: why did you decide to do the course [in childcare]?
> Gail: just something to do really, to benefit myself really, because I thought if I don't do something now... to keep my mind active you'll just not be able to do anything when you go back to work, that's one way of looking at it anyway
> EH: so it's for the future?
> Gail: yeah, it's just trying to do as much as I can while I can get the opportunities to go back to college to do things

Tina invokes similar reasons to Gail to explain why she hopes to begin work in a crèche, where her son will be present,

> EH: is there anything else you would get out of work, do you think?
> Tina: I don't want to be just sat at home not doing anything, like I'm bored already, although we go there three days a week [to a mothers' group], on the other days - like the Tuesdays and the Thursdays and the weekends, I wake up and think, "what are we going to today?" And it's just the same, week in and week out, you're doing the same stuff, so I think if I was to wait until he went to school I would be completely bored

At the time of our interview Joanne, aged 21, had not been involved in any training but was planning to begin a computer course in a few months time. Joanne also talked about the monotony of her daily routine and that it meant she had little to talk about with her friends when they met up. She hoped that training would give her the chance to meet other people. Having referred to her role in the family as "the brick person", she added "I wanted to do something for me". Joanne's younger brother lives with her and in the past she has cared for her sister's baby as well as her own two children. She feels that she holds her family together, and that doing a computer course will mean that she has something which is her own, for herself.

Training as appropriate in the pre-school years

It is interesting that for many of the interviewees training is constructed as appropriate and desirable in the pre-school years of their children's lives, but part time paid work, which could be for a similar number of hours, is not. The reasons for this apparent contradiction are based on the spatial arrangements of training in comparison to paid work as well as the other negatives of paid work that have been discussed. As explored above, childcare is seen a special kind of paid work, in that it can be appropriately taken during early childhood as it combines mothering and paid work on the same site. Similarly training courses are often undertaken at the same site that crèche care is provided, so mother and child are in the same building. Children will often be looked after by crèche workers that they are already familiar with from attending playgroups at the same centre. Claire has done a number of courses at the same centre over the past three or four years,

> EH: and is there any type of childcare you prefer or where you feel comfortable leaving him?
> Claire: well, I've got to know the workers in the crèche very well, you know, over the years because they've seen [her son] since he was a baby and they've seen him grow up and it's a shame because he can only stay in there till he's six

The combining of childcare and training on the same site reinforces the importance of providing training opportunities at children's centres. Tina, a participant in a childcare course reports another benefit of studying at mother's groups/children's centres,

> EH: how did you find the course?
> Tina: I enjoyed it. I thought it was going to be harder than it was, I think it was because, well because we go there anyway, if I would have to have done it by myself and gone to a college like say three days a week, I think it would have been a lot harder but because we go there anyway, and it was just like, it was there and while it was there we may as well do it - we go there three days a week anyway, and she [the tutor] was coming the three days a week, it was sort of there and we've done it, it seemed to go really quickly

So the course was made easier for Tina as it fitted it with her normal routine. Beth, the lone mother of a five year old, is not planning to do any courses, but expresses a wish for the combining of paid work and childcare on the same site,

EH: I think that is about it, is there anything else you wanted to say?
Beth: no nothing I can think of... just really that the government should be doing things like this [research projects] to be finding out what lone parents want... and encouraging firms, like this big B&Q now, they are employing part-time staff, why don't they encourage that firm, B&Q, to set up like a kids club, a crèche during the holidays so that the parents who work can bring their kids, not babies, children, and they've got someone safe to play, that they're in the same place as the parent – so if there's any problem the parent can see - the children know the parent is there. Because in America, like, all the big firms do have crèches and that

Other women shared Tina's experience of childcare and training on the same site making both easier, but reported that finding time to do coursework outside of teaching hours was difficult, this was the main drawback reported of training,

EH: and how have you found the crèche course?
Sharon: it's all right, it's a lot of writing and I find it hard to – to find the time when I am at home

EH: have you ever done any training since you left school, any studying?
Isabelle: done the crèche course here at the project
EH: and is that because you wanted to, or something to do, or -
Isabelle: it was on but I wanted to do it as well, but I am still having problems because there is an awful lot of written work that I have to get done within the next two weeks and I've got no time to bleedin' do it, because I have got [daughter] with me all the time, so I just can't find any time to actually sit down and write up what I have got to write, you know and I've got a fair bit to do within the next two weeks, which is going to be a big struggle

This may be a particular problem for lone parents who have sole care of their children and suggests that where possible childcare for private study time should be provided. Claire talks about dealing with the problem of finding time to do private study by working late at night,

EH: do you think, well some people think that mothers should stay at home till their children are a certain age - do you think mothers should stay at home?
Claire: well I feel as though I have more or less stayed at home anyway because I mean it's only been like mornings and things like that when I've been doing my study and I mean a lot of the time I've been doing my study when he's been in bed, and I've stayed up till two o'clock in the morning doing it, you know

It's interesting here that Claire, almost defensively, answers specifically in reference to her experiences, when my question asks abstractly if mothers should stay at home until their children reach a certain age. The value she places on being at home in the pre-school years is emphasised here as she describes her training, "it's only been like mornings and things", and private study "a lot of the time I've been doing my study when he's in bed" in terms which emphasise their

lack of impact on her son's life. Involvement in training is portrayed as not detracting from 'full time' mothering, with the assumption made that paid work would have more impact and that this would be negative.

The possibility of combining training and childcare on the same site is not the only reason why training seems to be acceptable when paid work is not. Some women talked about using family to provide childcare to leave them available to train. Presumably the same care could have been used to facilitate entry into paid work, but this route was not taken. This suggests that paid work is perceived to have a quality which separates it off from training and makes it unacceptable during the pre-school years, even when the demands, in terms of time, could be very similar. Helen's plans to do a hairdressing course are supported by her mother,

> Helen: ...my mum's going to have the children, they [the college] would have paid for a registered childminder to have them, but I'd rather leave them with my mum for a whole day like that, especially the younger one - the older one is not so bad, but I don't think I'd want to leave her [the younger child] with somebody I hardly know

Later in the interview, Helen expresses a strong belief that she should not begin paid work until her children are "both at school and they're both settled". Her different attitude to training is interesting and may be because the course demands only one day a week at college and significantly, because of potential difficulties she anticipates in combining the roles of mother and employee,

> Helen: I won't want to get a job till they're both at school and they're both settled, basically because what if one of them is not very well and then I take a day off? And then I get the sack for that reason, because I've got to be home with my children

Kate's oldest son has begun full time school and she hopes that her younger child will have gained a place in nursery by the time she begins her computer course, if not her mother will look after him. Like Helen, Kate does not intend to enter into paid work until her youngest son is aged five or six, but she considers it appropriate to be involved in training. Ann, mother of a four year old daughter, was planning to begin a two year full time course and said that she would feel

better entering paid work after the course, when her daughter will be seven years old, than now. Again this shows a difference between the perceptions of training and the perceptions of paid work.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the popularity, meaning and experiences of training. I have shown that for a number of the interviewees, training is thought to be more appropriate at this stage of their child's/children's lives than paid work; training has less impact on their lives than the anticipated consequences of participation in paid work, often child care and training are provided on the same site and the demands of training can be made subordinate to the demands of mothering. For example, when Claire talks about studying at night after her son has fallen asleep. The chapter has shown the importance of training centres as the sources of information about training and for providing training and childcare and I have argued that a Sure Start target around participation in training would better fit with the lives of lone mothers than a target based on engagement in paid work. I have also argued that training can be part of a 'training career', to gradually lead a lone mother into paid work, that training may be valued as something which the lone mother may have for 'herself' and that for some, it provides qualifications which might make the transition to paid work easier. For these lone mothers, much of the training was participation in childcare courses and I have shown that this might be more indicative of a desire to participate in *any* course and more importantly a desire to combine paid work and mothering on the same site, than of long term intentions to work in formal child care.

This is the last chapter in my discussion of the 20 interviews that I conducted with self-defined lone mothers. In the next chapter, the conclusion of this thesis, I consider the main findings from these six chapters based on my fieldwork and the implications of these in terms of social policy for lone mothers, the development of a research agenda for the sociology of lone motherhood and how my study relates to the ethic of care debates.

Chapter eleven

Conclusion

In the course of this thesis, I have examined the position of lone mothers and their relationship to the spheres of paid and unpaid work in three fields: in existing empirical research (chapter one), in the theorising of care and domestic labour in the domestic labour debate and the ethic of care perspective (chapter two) and in social policy (chapter three). In each of these areas I identified problems with the understanding of the place of care and paid work in the lives of lone mothers and, in chapter four, I outlined the methodology of my empirical study which aimed to overcome some of these weaknesses. I argued for a research approach that blended the concerns of a social policy or 'official' agenda for lone mothers, i.e. a concern with participation in paid work, with a more sociological approach which sought to explore the social worlds of lone mothers, for example, the meanings and experiences of care-giving for them. I argued that this study was particularly relevant in a time when paid work is being cast as integral to the 'good lone mother' in policy.

In chapters five to ten I reported the findings of my study. Chapter five provided background detail on the past experiences of paid work of the interviewees. Chapters six and seven were organised around the themes by which paid work is promoted by New Labour and in the NDLP, and I argued that lone mothers have a more sophisticated understanding of the impact of paid work on their lives than is found in the *additive* approach of New Labour. Chapter eight considered the factors that lone mothers take into account when considering the timing of their (re)entry to paid work. The importance of having a decent place to care, an adequate home, was a particular theme that emerged in the course of the fieldwork and this was considered in chapter nine, along with the role of kin, partners and wider social networks in the lives of lone mothers. Here the distinction was made between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' and the impact this had on the social worlds of the lone mothers. In chapter ten I explored the uses and experience of participating in training courses for the interviewees; the high level of

involvement in training was another unanticipated finding of the study. In this last chapter, I rehearse the key findings of this study and identify the contributions made to social research, to the theorising of paid work and care and the implications for social policy. I also suggest some questions that remain unanswered and some areas for future study.

Findings, contributions and future research

In the past the moral hierarchy of lone mothers was based on a particular sexual morality, while in the policy and rhetoric of the New Labour governments, a new moral hierarchy of lone mothers has emerged based on participation (or not) in paid work. Paid work is promoted as increasing the incomes of lone mothers, and as providing them with 'personal moral improvement' and a route to social inclusion. For New Labour paid work is constructed abstractly and as something that is almost always positive for lone mothers. In my empirical work I have shown that lone mothers have a more complex understanding of the impact of paid work, rooted in the practical context of their lives. The interviewees cast doubt on whether they really would be financially better off in paid work when the full range of costs of employment was taken into account. All of the interviewees thought participation in employment was important and all planned to re(enter) paid work eventually; only for a few was this cast as a move to a higher moral ground. Even for these women, an orientation to an *ethic of care* was clear in their accounts, and the importance of 'being there' for children in the pre-school years was articulated. The need or a right for young children to be cared for, full time, by their mothers was also expressed.

New Labour would like paid work to be a priority for lone mothers and the NDLP uses a 'work-first' approach, which aims to get lone mothers into paid work as quickly as possible, though limited provision for training is made. I have shown that some women embark on what can be termed *training careers* before they consider entering paid work. In the NDLP, paid work is considered as a route to social inclusion for lone mothers, but for many of the women in this study,

employment was simply considered inappropriate with regard to the age of their child(ren) and was not in their sights. However, many of the interviewees were involved in training and this was seen to have a number of benefits, including that it had less impact on their lives than anticipated from entering employment. Training was seen as providing 'something to do' in the period before (re)entering paid work and a number of interviewees said it meant they had 'something behind them', which they anticipated would facilitate their entry to paid work when the time was right. Training courses also seemed to play a role in the social inclusion of some lone mothers, who talked about feeling lonely, bored and isolated at 'home'. Training and services for children gave the lone mothers 'something to do' and a chance to 'get out' of their home. These services might be particularly important for lone mothers who are 'outsiders' in the local area and do not have the same access to family and well-established social networks that some 'insiders' enjoy.

For the lone mothers interviewed paid work is not seen as desirable or appropriate and these findings suggest that increased opportunities for training in children's centres, rather than more pressure to enter paid work would be better received. It also suggests that community-based forms of social inclusion should have a greater role than those based on participation in paid work and that children's centres may be a better way for governments to reach lone mothers than the use of job centre based programmes. I also noted the apparent popularity of childcare courses, and argued this should not be interpreted as a desire to work in childcare, but instead was a strategy lone mothers developed to combine caring for their own child and paid work in the same place.

These findings suggest that lone mothers may embark on a slow and careful route into paid work. As part of this, women may participate in a wide range of training and this should be supported in policy, for example, a wider range of training could be promoted in the NDLP. It also needs to be appreciated here that the positive outcomes of training are not limited to taking up a job in the same area. Training can be 'something to do' for lone mothers feeling isolated or wanting to 'get out of the house', and in this way may play a role in the social inclusion of

some women. The findings here also suggest that the best way for services, such as the NDLP, to reach the lone mothers of young children may not be via the jobcentre, but through children's centre.

A wider life project: the importance of home

I have suggested that for some women the transition to paid work is not constructed as something that will happen at a particular point in time, but is more rooted in the overall context of their lives. Entry to employment is part of a *wider life project*, something that will be embarked upon once other areas of their lives have been settled. Establishing a decent home was one example of a *wider life project* and home emerged as an especially important site for lone mothers. Creating a decent home can be difficult for women on low-incomes and should be seen as a further dimension of the unpaid work or caring activities that lone mothers engage in. The importance of a *place to care* and the experiences of home for mothers has been under-researched.

For some lone mothers establishing a decent home is an essential part of what may be a long journey (back) into paid work. In terms of housing policy, this finding emphasises the importance of local authorities finding permanent housing for lone mothers as quickly as possible. It also suggests that if more help, money and resources where available for lone mothers to 'sort out' their homes, then this might play a role in facilitating the process of lone mothers entering employment. This could be the case particularly for lone mothers who viewed creating a decent home as a goal that should be achieved before thinking about paid work becomes acceptable. The debt that can be accrued from making a home suggests that the feasibility of providing more resources that are not loan based for lone mothers to pay for household goods, decorating and furniture, should be considered. The scepticism found among some lone mothers in this study over the financial rewards of paid work, might imply that debt repayments are a further disincentive to entering the (perceived) financially unstable world of paid work.

Sure Start and Paid Work

Some interviewees rejected the idea that mothering and housework should be

viewed as work or a job and some of the interviewees likened these activities to 'doing nothing'; but the fiction of this was revealed when the interviewees talked about extra workload and decreased time and energy they would have if combining the roles of lone mother and employee. It was clear that the lone mothers had internalised the paid work ethic, or at least the importance of 'publicly' declaring a belief in the importance of employment, however, there was also an orientation to an ethic of care. This was discernible in the accounts of lone mothers who expressed finding full time mothering difficult, but prioritised the importance of care by mothers over their potential role in the labour market. It is problematic then that the Sure Start programme is moving further away from an emphasis on community or service-based social inclusion for mothers and is stressing more the employment of parents of young children. A policy informed by an ethic of care and working with the 'gendered moral rationalities' of lone mothers, would move in the opposite direction, whilst supporting the employment of lone mothers where this was desired. I have also highlighted the range of caring relationships that some lone mothers are involved in, which are essential activities and suggest that some lone mothers are already in established social networks; this range of caring work might be difficult to combine with formal employment.

The role of men and definitions of lone motherhood

This study has provided some interesting data on the role of partners or ex-partners in the lives of lone mothers and, relatedly, on the definition of 'lone motherhood'. Like most survey-based research, I used self-identification as the criterion for lone motherhood in my qualitative study and this meant I interviewed women who were in a range of relationships with their partners or ex-partners. A group of particular interest here were the 'lone mothers' who continued to be in a relationship with a partner and who sometimes, or most of the time, lived together. However, the instability of these relationships, or the fact that the partner in question did not meet their expectations of what a partner should provide, such as financial support, or involvement in childcare, meant these women felt there were 'lone' mothers. This identification was important in official terms, determining the benefits that these women were eligible to claim;

however, as was demonstrated in the case of one interviewee, this meant that she was sometimes claiming benefits fraudulently as her cohabiting partner would not contribute to the household finances. Much more research is needed in this area of the identification and identity-construction of 'lone mothers', and how the income support system could be reformed here. These difficulties in defining lone mothers could be used to suggest that specific policies aimed at them, i.e. the NDLP, are focussing on particular women while ignoring women in identical situations, who do not choose to identify as 'lone mothers', but may face similar issues. The official category of 'lone mother' defines lone motherhood fairly unproblematically and this is not reflected in the lives of women who identify with this term.

Further research and concluding thoughts

The findings of this study suggest a number of routes for further research and the rich qualitative data generated underline the importance of an approach that combines a policy studies perspective with a concern to explore the social worlds of lone mothers. As already noted, the experiences of home and the social networks of lone mothers remain under-researched and little attention has been given to the relationships between lone mothers and their ex- or current partners. This study provides some interesting insights on this topic, particularly in terms of the lives of the men who visit their partners and live with various female family members. Other research attention could consider in more depth the range of caring relationships that lone mothers engage in and the way that these are structured by class, ethnicity and other social divisions. In this study the focus has been on the national articulations of policy, and there is more work to be done on the local translation of policy provisions into local services; for example, do PAs exert pressure on lone mothers to enter paid work? Are lone mothers from different routes to lone motherhood treated differently? How are the 500 plus Sure Start programmes responding to the increased emphasis on paid work for parents in their nationally set targets?

As noted in chapter one, research has suggested that lone mothers' attitudes and values may differ according to their social class, ethnicity and area they live in,

thus the wider relevance of my findings for all lone mothers, or even for all lone mothers in receipt of income support cannot be claimed. The experiences of these lone mothers, engaged in the full time care of their children while living on income support, does suggest the need for the ethic of care perspective to be more fully informed by empirical research and to take more account of the difficulties of caring for women on low incomes. In this study, the practical difficulties of caring on a low income were visible, and the need for time to care, a decent place to care and sufficient resources to care without the burdens of debt were articulated. For policy to support this, it needs to be informed by a broader ethic of care which appreciates the experiences of care-giving for lone mothers and the material reality of their daily lives. In policy, care needs to be conceptualised not as an obstacle to be overcome, but as a necessity and valued in its own right as an activity that has both positive and negative dimensions for care-givers (and receivers). This would mean ensuring care and its associated unpaid work is adequately resourced and valued on at least equal terms with employment.

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Appendix I

Interview schedule

Background questions
How many children do you have? What are their ages? How old were you when they were born? Does anyone else live here?

How long have you lived in your current home? How long have you lived in this area? Where did you live previously? Were you brought up around here?

How long have you been a lone parent?/Have you always been a lone parent?

Have you ever been married or shared a house with a boyfriend/partner?

Motherhood, family and friends

Children and mothering/parenting
How many children do you have? How old are they? How old are you?

What are your children like, difficult or easy? Is being a mother as you expected it? Is there more work involved in bringing up children than you thought there would be?

How much housework do you do, per day? Do you have a routine? Do you see enjoy or dislike housework? Do you see it as a job?

What sort of things do you do with your child(ren), eg activities? Outside of the home, is it difficult to afford to do any of the things that you would like to be able to do?

Can you always afford to buy new clothes, shoes, food when you need to? How do you manage at times of extra costs like birthdays and Christmas? Do you go without anything for your child(ren)? Do you feel your child(ren) misses out because of lack of money? E.g.?

Do you have any savings you can draw on, or family/friends who help out?

Can you buy all of the things for your children that you would like to be able to?

Has your child started school yet? What do you think it will be like once they have? How will that change your life day-to-day?

What hopes or ambitions do you have for your child(ren)?

Would you like to have any more child(ren)?

Being a lone parent
What is it like to be a lone mother? More or less difficult than with

partner/husband? What are the best and worst things about being a parent and about being a lone parent?

Do you have a partner? Would you like to marry or live with someone (again)? Do you want to have more children?

Do you go out without your child(ren), e.g. at weekends or evening? How often? What do you do? (If no)Would you like to? Who looks after your child(ren) when you go out?

Childcare

Who do you feel comfortable about leaving your children with? Is there anyone who helps out with your child(ren) or looks after them without you? *<if applicable>* At what age do you think you will feel comfortable leaving your children?

What do you think is the best form of childcare – nursery, childminder, using family/friends? Why? What do you think of the other two options? Would you consider using any of these forms of childcare if they were available?

Family and friends

Who are the important people in your life? Friends – are these people in a similar position to you? Do these people have children? Are they in paid work?

Does any of your family live in this area or nearby? Do you get to see them regularly? As often as you would like? How long does it take to get there? Mode of transport?

Do you have access to a phone? Can you afford to use it whenever you want? Do you speak to another adult everyday?

Do you have any caring responsibilities for any friends or family – e.g. because of illness or childcare? What do you do? How often?

Services and schemes

Sure Start

Do you use any local services with your child(ren)? What are they like? Frequency? Activities? Providers?

Have you heard of Sure Start? (if yes) What do you think the aims of the programme are? <if haven't heard of Sure Start then explain what it is eg "Sure Start is a programme paid for by the government with the aim of improving services for children under 4 yeárs old. For example, by having more playgroups and employing more health visitors. There is one of these projects for children and parents in Hartcliffe, Withywood and Highridge"> *(if child over 4) Do you think there is a need for such a programme in this area? Is it a good idea?*

Is your child(ren) registered *<have you filled in a card for them, do they have a Sure Start number>* with Sure Start? How long have they been registered/using

their services? Why did you register? Do you use any of their facilities? What pre-school or other activities are they involved in?

Have you had any involvement with or help from Sure Start? How did this come about? Was it useful? Did you think the people were friendly? Good with children?

What more do you think Sure Start should be doing? What services do you/your child(ren)/the area need?

New Deal

Have you heard of the New Deal for Lone Parents? What do you think the aims of the NDLP are? <if haven't heard of NDLP then explain eg "NDLP is based at jobcentres and provides lone parents with a member of staff, a personal advisor, whom they can talk to to get advice about getting a job, what income they would get and in-work benefits> *Do you think this service sounds a good idea?*

Have you had experience of the NDLP or do you know anyone who has? What did you/think of it?

What did you think of the PA that you saw – were they helpful, knowledgeable, friendly?

Was it helpful, did it lead to any changes in your thoughts about what help is available or the prospect of entering employment?

Have you heard about the WFTC? *<explain – a tax credit, paid through the wage packet, which supplements the wages of low paid working parents>* Is it something that would make a difference to you when/if thinking about going back to work?

Do you know about Childcare Tax Credit? *<explain – tax credit for use of formal, registered childcare, covers 70% of the cost, with limits of £135 per week for 1 child and £200 per week for 2 or more children. For lone parents who work 16 hours or more per week>* Do you think this would be of any use to you? Is it something that would make a difference to you when/if thinking about going back to work?

Lone parents making a new claim for income support (and gradually all lone parents) have to attend an interview at the job centre with a personal advisor or risk losing some of their benefit? Do you think these interviews are a good idea? Do you think they should be compulsory?

What sort of help or services do you think there should be for lone parents?
Is there any type of help you would like to receive about going back to work or getting information about doing so?

Paid Work and training

Employment

How old were you when you left school? What did you do when you left school? What qualifications did you have? Did you have a particular job in mind that you wanted to do?

Do you do any bits of paid work at the moment? Details?

Are you looking for a job?

When did you last do some paid work? or Have you ever had a job? or Were you working before you became pregnant with your first/subsequent child? <*investigate work history*> Did you enjoy that job? What hours did you work? How did it come about that you got that job? Why did you leave your last job?

Have you had any training or done any studying since leaving school?

Would you like to have a job? Part-time or full-time? Why? What would you need for this to happen? <*eg childcare, qualifications, child to be older etc*> What sort of differences to your life do you think getting a job would make? And to your child(ren)? Do you think it would cause any problems or difficulties? What would the positive effects be? And the negative ones?

What do most mothers around here do? Do they have paid jobs or look after children full-time? Are they married/co-habiting/single?

Was you mother employed while you were growing up? What job did she do? Was this a good or bad thing (for her, for the children)? Father employed? What job? <if siblings live in area or friends in are> - Do your brothers and sisters work, do your friends work? What jobs?

Do you think mothers with child(ren) the same age as yours are should work? At what age do you think it is suitable for mothers to begin working? Is it different for single/lone mothers compared with mothers with a husband/partner?

Do you feel any pressure to get a paid job? Who from? How is this shown? What do you think about that?

Do you think housework and looking after your children should be regarded as a job?

What would you like to be doing when your child(ren) are older? or What, if anything, do you hope will be different in your life in a years time?

Local area

Do you think it would be easy to get a job if you wanted to? Why? Is there anywhere in this area where you would like to work?

Do you think being a lone mother would affect your chances of getting a job?

Is there much provision of childcare in this area?

Do you do any volunteer work? Any involvement with community group, schools, playgroups?

Do you help out anyone else, friends or family, e.g. shopping, caring housework?

Living in Hartcliffe, Withywood, Highridge
Is this a good flat/house to live in? Why? Can you afford to use as much gas/electricity as you need to, e.g. for heating all the rooms in the house?

What is it like to live here? E.g. in relation to other areas that you have lived in? Do you know your neighbours and people who live nearby? What do you think of them?

Has the area got better or worse since you moved here? What changes, if any, do you think there need to be? What could be done that would improve living here? What are the good and bad things about this area? How do you think this area compares with other areas of Bristol?

What are the other services/facilities/shops round here like, e.g. supermarkets, post office, job centre, benefit agency, doctors, library etc? What needs to be improved?

How do you get around the area or go into town? Do you have a car? Do you use the buses? What do you think of the service?

Would you like to stay in this area? Do you think you will still be living here in a year's time?

End of interview
Thank and ask if anything else want to add or have remembered, any questions.

Appendix II

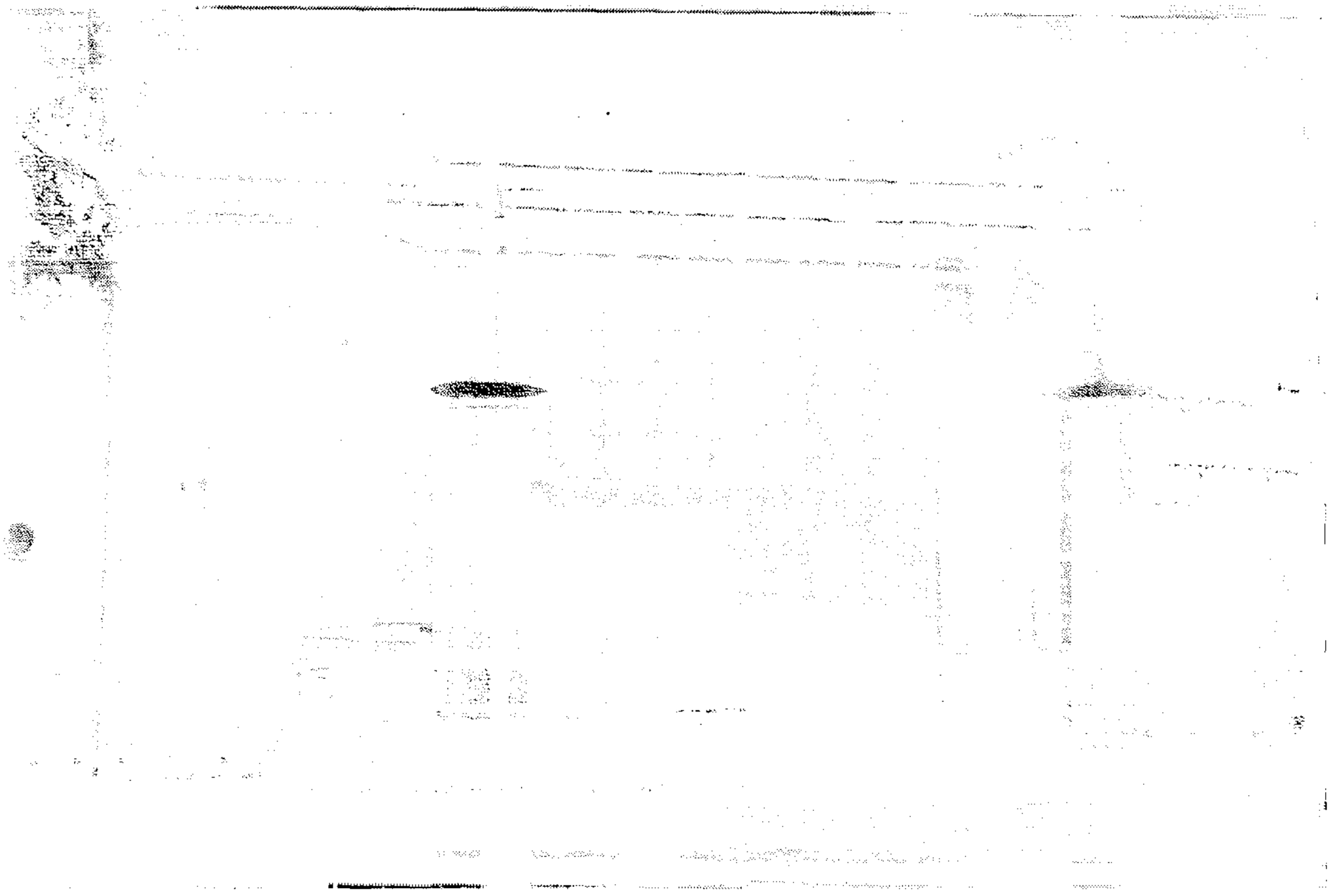
Hartcliffe, Withywood and Highridge: a profile of the area

With one border on the southern edge of the city, Hartcliffe is physically isolated from the employment and services found in the rest of the city (HCC 2000: 11). In 2000 Bristol City Council submitted a bid to the European Commission for *Urban II* funds for the southern Bristol area, including parts of Hartcliffe; this described south Bristol as suffering from, "high levels of long-term unemployment, social exclusion and crime, exacerbated by low levels of economic activity, education and skills in a particularly run-down environment" (Bristol Urban II 2000: 3). The trigger for the economic and environmental decline of south Bristol was the closure of the print and engineering industries in the area and the loss of the tobacco manufacturers in the 1970s and 80s. This included the closure of the Wills Tobacco Company and subsequent loss of a traditional employment route for young people in the area (Bristol Urban II 2000: 9). The closures of these industries left many people unemployed but new industries did not move into the area to compensate for the losses. Since 1985 2200 jobs have been lost in the Hartcliffe and Withywood area (COGB n.d.). The growth sectors of employment in Bristol are in broadcast media, high technology and financial services (Bristol Urban II 2000: 3, 6). However these opportunities are concentrated in the north of the city and the connections between south Bristol and the rest of the city are poor and these type of vacancies may be unsuitable given the general skill levels in south Bristol (Bristol Urban II 2000: 3, 10).

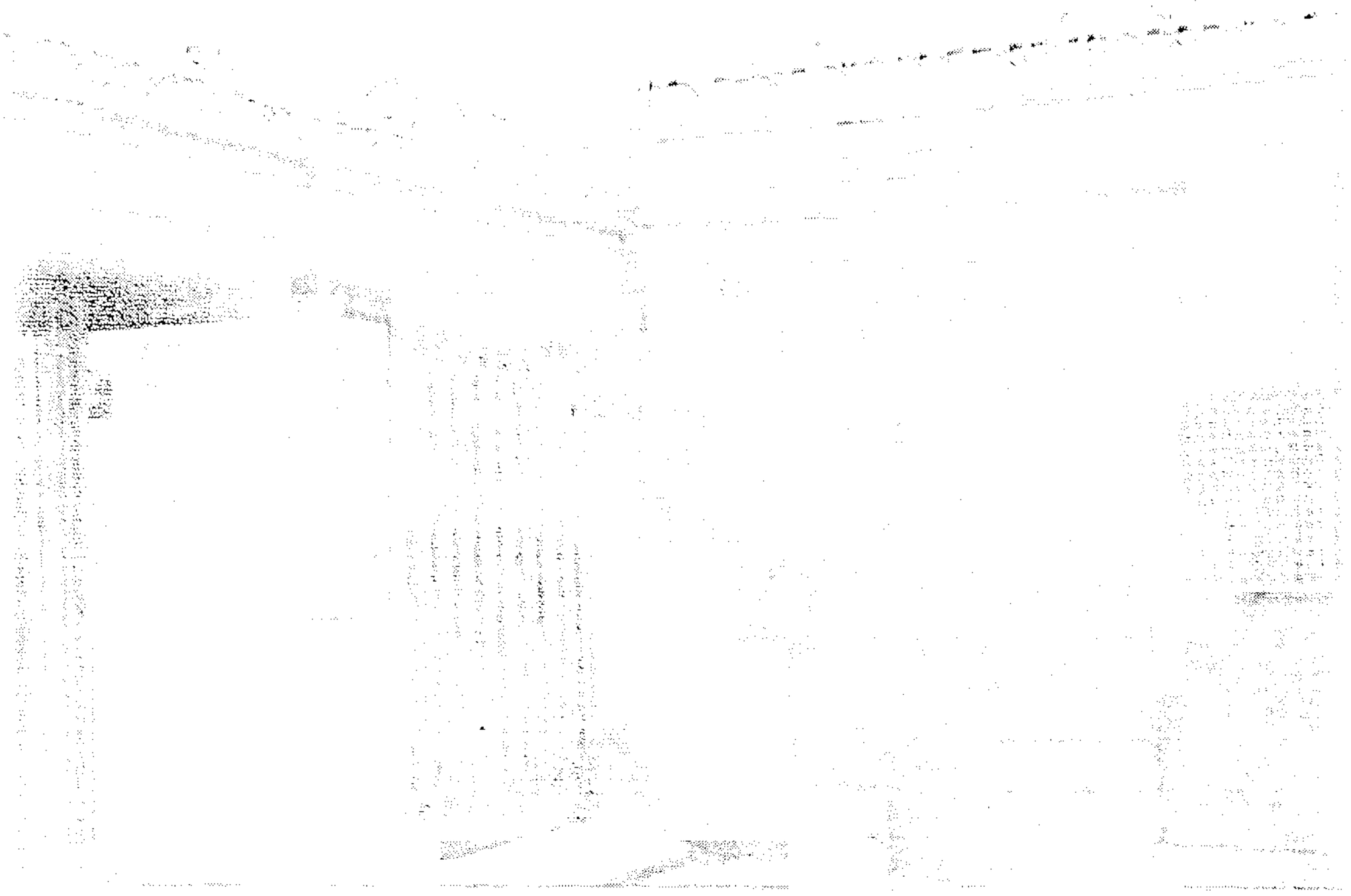
Despite the economic decline of this area, some companies have remained in business and more employers are moving into the area. In 1998 60% of jobs in the south Bristol area were with large employers, defined as those with 50 plus employees. This includes Somerfield, which has its headquarters in the area, Matthew Clarke and First Bus (Bristol Urban II 2000: 10). A recent addition to the local labour market has been the building of a new B&Q store near the old Wills tobacco factory site, which opened in August 2001 and other retail outlets will follow; it is estimated that eventually 1300 people will be employed on this site in retail and service sector jobs. The administration for the B&Q store is run from offices in the same building as the Bishopsworth job centre. The recruitment for the new store was tendered out to the Employment Service who provided a dedicated phone line for these vacancies. In June 2001 Symes Avenue job centre was using these vacancies to promote the NDLP, a poster on the front door spread the news of the NDLP by urging lone mothers to "find out how much better off you could be working for B&Q". The Symes Avenue job centre is small, and visually less appealing than other jobs centres in Bristol, unlike a number of job centres in the city, Symes Avenue does not appear to have been recently redecorated. This may be because of the delay in the future of Symes Avenue becoming clear. On the job boards, blue stickers are attached to 'local' vacancies, though very few jobs are marked in this way. Most of the 'local' vacancies refer to service industry work in Withywood or Whitchurch (a neighbouring area), such as kitchen workers or shop staff.

Symes Avenue is of central importance in Hartcliffe; it is the main shopping area and is generally regarded as a key site for the regeneration of the area (see picture 1). Symes Avenue is lined with three-storey buildings - most of the first and second-floor windows are boarded up, or broken, or both. On the ground floor, a number of buildings which were once shops, now stand empty and are increasingly derelict. Out of 34 shop units, only 11 are now occupied (Bristol Urban II 2000: 14). These house two small supermarkets: an Iceland store and a Co-Op shop; a chemist; a hardware shop; a grocery store; an off-licence; a bakery; a fish and chip shop; a job centre and an advice centre. At the far end of the road is a formidable building with metal doors, framed by barbed wire: the local Housing and Social Services Office, next door the public library (see pictures 2 and 3). The drive for the redevelopment of the Symes Avenue area began in the early 1990s when businesses there began to close down (BBC Online, 2000). In 1999 a property development company, proposed a £10 million plan to use the site for a new supermarket and other shops and facilities for the community (BBC Online, 2000 and Onions, 2001). In 2000 Bristol City Council approved this plan but the size of the project meant a public enquiry had to be held and approval sought from the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (Onions 2001). This public inquiry was held in March 2001 and permission for the scheme to go ahead was granted. At the time of writing (2001) work on Symes Avenue has not begun and it remains as the government planning inspector described it, a "visually depressed" site (Onions 2001). There are no banks in Symes Avenue or the surrounding area and no cashpoints.

Picture 1 Symes Avenue



Picture 2 Housing and Social Services Office



Picture 3 The Library

A number of schemes are involved in the regeneration of the Hartcliffe area. In 1999 Hartcliffe and Withywood was awarded funding the fifth round of the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB5). The Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership (HWCP) has been established to run the SRB5 and the regeneration is organised around seven themes that form the umbrella groups for the various projects which take place under their name. The seven theme groups are called safe, health, balanced (concerned with environment and housing issues), learning, local ownership, working and inclusive. Local residents are encouraged to be involved in SRB5, and can do so by joining one of these theme groups. The HWCP offices are located in the Gatehouse Centre. The Gatehouse Centre is owned by Hartcliffe and Withywood Ventures (HWV), a company established in 1985 "by local people and workers to address the problem of unemployment in the area" (HWV 2000). The shops and services around the Gatehouse include a hairdressers, garden furniture shop, solicitors, a job shop, and a community education office. The HWV organisation is a training provider and runs a number of courses and initiatives based in the centre. These include a number of NVQ courses, modern apprenticeships, work-based training for adults, basic literacy and numeracy courses and courses in play work. There is a crèche, which provides childcare facilities for parents attending courses onsite.

Another important site for the regeneration of the area is the *Hartcliffe Community Campus* (HCC) (HCC 2000: 7), a 57 acre site, where the Teyfant Community School (Primary school), Hartcliffe Comprehensive and the City of Bristol College are located. The HCC project aims to bring about sustainable development of the site, to develop the best use of the existing facilities and to create new resources. A garden area on the site has been redeveloped and is described as "a clear visual message" that the "site is improving and is being looked after" (HCC 2000: 23). A toddlers play area makes up part of the Millennium Garden and the Sure Start programme provided funding for the play equipment here. On this site the *Hartcliffe Centre*, part of the City of Bristol College, runs courses in literacy and numeracy, administration, GCSE and vocational courses, business, health and social care courses, counselling and nursery nursing. These are free to people aged under nineteen and those receiving benefits, and a crèche is available. The HCC project has already been running for five years and the development is planned to last 15 years in total. It will involve the rebuilding of all the school buildings. As 'Community Schools' these will be used by children during the day and remain open after school hours for the general community, to encourage adults to return to learning. Funding for the HCC has come from a number of sources, including Bristol City Council, SRB5 and the three educational establishments on the site (Wham 2001).

As a Sure Start trailblazer area facilities for families with young children in the area are undergoing improvements. The Hartcliffe Early Years Centre provides facilities for young children and their parents, with play and care facilities for children and education, training and support to their parents. In a newspaper interview, the head of the centre said that its strength was in "educational and emotional care for the whole family. It's a fantastic place for parents who may not have worked for a while, or even liked school. For them it is a step back into education, which benefits their children too" (Greenwood 2001: 3). Sure Start funds will eventually enable a new centre to be built to replace the older building.

Although Sure Start has links with the Hartcliffe Early Years Centre and the HCC, projects in the east of this area, its main bases lie to the west of the area. The first of these are two former classrooms at Gay Elms Primary School. These have been decorated by local parents; one room provides a space for meetings, the other is a playroom for drop-in sessions that are run here. Sure Start's administrative base is at the Four Acres Primary School, here a parents' room and a playroom are being developed. Similar facilities are being built in Highridge. The distribution of Sure Start services within its target area is very important. The national guidelines for programmes state that services should be within "pram pushing distance" for families in the catchment area, to be accessible to all (Sure Start 2000*c*: 12). The *New Fulford Family Centre,* built in 1995, also provides services for families in the area. Its work is funded by a partnership between Barnardos and Bristol Social Services. The centre is open to all families with children under five in the area and it also assesses families referred by Social Services. The centre runs various children's groups, drop-in play sessions, as well as counselling groups, a group for ethnic minority families and a welfare rights clinic. Barnardos is also the lead partner of the Hartcliffe Sure Start, administering and managing the financial aspect of the project. This links Sure Start and the Fulford centre and highlights the long involvement of Barnardos in community and partnership work in Bristol (Sharma and Coombe 2001: 17).

There are a range of facilities for parents to use with their children and while participating in training, but access to childcare for parents entering paid work is more difficult to find. While the Gatehouse and the Hartcliffe centre of the City of Bristol College provide a crèche for those attending training courses, these facilities are not available for parents moving into the labour market. Neither the Early Years Centre nor the Fulford Family Centre provide childcare for employed parents. There are no other nurseries in the local area, so there is no full-time or extended centre-based childcare in the area. In the original plan for the Hartcliffe, Withywood and Highridge Sure Start, provision was included for recruiting and training child minders but not for a day care or nursery centre. In response to government plans that there should be childcare places to meet the needs of lone parents in disadvantaged areas by 2004, Sure Start has had to revise their locally made decision to pursue childcare in the form of childminding. The programme has now put in a joint proposal to SRB5, the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative and Sure Start nationally for funding for centre-based childcare provision. If this is successful then a small number of childcare places in the Hartcliffe area will be available by March 2002 and a year later a total of 50 places will become available. The lack of childcare facilities in the area reflect national and city-wide shortages. Bristol City Council's Adult Learning Plan (2000-2002) expresses this: "(t)here is an urgent need to develop the childcare workforce if parents are to be able to access quality childcare in order to work or train" (2000: 27). The Local Education Authority is working with the Bristol Early Years and Childcare Partnership to improve childcare provision in the city and has "identified an acute skills shortage in all areas [of childcare]" and is pursuing a recruitment campaign to encourage new workers into the field (2000: 27).

This account of the Hartcliffe area shows it to be an area in the midst of regeneration, the expansion of services and general improvements, though the impact of all these changes might not yet be felt by residents. Overall, statistics

on the Hartcliffe area present it quite a deprived place with a disadvantaged population, however caution needs to be taken when reflecting on these statistics from different sources tend to not use the same boundaries for their sample, and some do not clearly state the area they refer to.

In mid-1998 the population of Hartcliffe was estimated to be 10,800 people (National Statistics 2001a). Counts and percentages for particular groups of the local population are shown in Table 1, below. The Sure Start boundary encompasses Hartcliffe, Withywood and Highridge and so refers to a larger population.

Table 1 Resident population estimates for Hartcliffe

Section of population	**Number (mid 1998)**	**Percentage of total population (mid 1998)**
Resident population aged under 16	2400	23
Resident population aged 16-59	5800	54
Resident population aged 60 or over	2500	23
Resident economically active population aged 16-59	4800	44

Source: National Statistics, Neighbourhood statistics

3% of the population of Hartcliffe and Withywood "describe themselves as coming from an ethnic minority background" (Urban II 2000: 18). Unity, a support group, holds weekly meetings for "black and multi-racial families" living in Hartcliffe, Withywood, Highridge and Bishopsworth. This group was established "in response to the feelings of isolation and fear... [and] in response to the number of racist incidents and harassment in the area" (Unity 2000).

The Indices of Deprivation, 2000 (DETR) are a key source of statistical data for exploring the level of deprivation at the ward level. This data is based on ward boundaries at 1st April 1998 and is constructed from 33 indicators (DETR 2000: 2, 5). It focuses on various 'domains' of deprivation: income, employment, health, education, housing, geographical access to services and child poverty. Table 2 shows Hartcliffe's ranking on each of these domains.

Table 2 Hartcliffe's Bristol and National Ward Ranking on Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2000

Rank of deprivation	**Bristol ward ranking** (out of 34 wards*)	**National ward ranking** (out of 8414 wards*)
Rank of index of multiple deprivation	8	1036
Rank of income domain	12	1808

Rank of employment domain	8	1705
Rank of health domain	9	1500
Rank of education	3	56
Rank of housing domain	12	1627
Rank of access domain	13	6064
Rank of child poverty index	12	1593

*In each case, 1 indicates the most deprived ward
Source: DETR, Indices of Deprivation, reproduced in Bristol City Council, Adult Learning Plan 2000-2002 and National statistics, Neighbourhood Statistics.

The above statistics show that around a quarter to a third of the wards in Bristol are rated more deprived than Hartcliffe. The domain where Hartcliffe does particularly badly is in education, ranking third most deprived ward in Bristol and fifty-sixth most deprived nationally. The poor education rating is reflected in the high levels of low basic literacy skills in the area (HCC: 11), table 3 shows the Basic Skills Agency's estimates of low literacy and numeracy levels in Hartcliffe, for Bristol overall and the national averages.

Table 3 Estimates of Populations aged 16-60 with Poor Literacy Skills, for Hartcliffe, Bristol and National areas

Area	**Population aged 16-60**	**Low literacy (%)**	**Lower literacy (%)**	**Very low literacy (%)**	**Total poor literacy (%)**
Hartcliffe ward	6138	16.6	5.9	5.8	28.3
City of Bristol	246,976	15.1	4.7	4.6	24.5
National averages	---	15.0	5.0	4.0	24.0

Source: Basic Skills Agency (2001)

At the national level, around a one-sixth to one-fifth of the wards in England rank as more deprived than Hartcliffe on many of the domains. Perhaps the most surprising statistic here is Hartcliffe's ranking of 6064 (out of 8414 wards nationally) on the geographical access to services index, meaning that about 70% of wards throughout England are rated 'more deprived' than Hartcliffe on this measure. This statistic is particularly surprising when compared with the above discussion of the Symes Avenue area and demands an examination of the criteria on which the 'access' score is constructed; these are access to a post office, to food shops, to a GP and to a primary school (BANES 2000). The limits of this measure become clear; although the score tells about the existence of a rather limited number of services, it is not a comment on the quality of these services or on access at the level of individual interactions, i.e. there may be a Health Centre in the area but its existence tells us little about the how easy or difficult it is to get an appointment to see a doctor and in what timescale.

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions use the measures of the 10% and 20% most deprived wards to "...represent the most severely deprived areas" (Ibid.). Hartcliffe's 'rank of index of multiple deprivation' on a national scale places it just outside of the 10% most deprived wards in England. To rank generally of an area at the ward level can obscure variations in deprivation and inequalities that exist within it. The ward of Hartcliffe covers the areas of Hartcliffe, Withywood and Highridge. While people from Hartcliffe and Withywood formed a partnership to successfully bid for SRB5 funds, the Highridge area was not included. At a Sure Start visitor afternoon, one of the Sure Start workers explained that Highridge has poor quality housing and being on the periphery of the main area, is often overlooked. There are few services in the area and so Sure Start has funded a new capital build there, which will provide a playroom, a family room and an office.

Hartcliffe has one of the highest concentrations of social housing in the South West, with housing built during the 1950s to 1970s (HWCP*a*, HWCP*b*) (see picture 4 and 5). Of the social housing in the Urban II area 1800 homes are rated 'unimproved' by the City Council; they are poorly insulated and have high heating costs (Bristol Urban II 2000: 11). In recent years three blocks of flats have been demolished and some maisonettes and five multi-storey blocks have been refurbished (Dibble 2000: 25). There is a low rate of car ownership in the area, 44% of households do not have access to a car (HCC 2000: 11). In August 1998 there were 890 Income Support claimants in the Hartcliffe ward, 11% of all adults aged over 16 years. This is 3% higher than the overall figure for Great Britain and 2% more than the average for the city of Bristol (National Statistics 2001a). Of these 890 income support claimants, 270 were in receipt of the lone parent premium (National Statistics 2001b).

Picture 4 View of blocks of flats

Picture 6 Some houses in the area

Table 4, below, presents the figures for unemployed claimants in August 2000. The ward boundaries used are as in 1991 and the rates presented are "estimates based on 1991 Census resident workforce data" (Bristol City Council 2000: 38).

Table 4 Unemployed Claimants, August 2000

Area	Male no.	Rate (%)	Female no.	Rate (%)	Total no.	Rate (%)	Share of total unemployed claimants (%)
Hartcliffe	125	4.1	38	1.8	163	3.2	2.1
Bristol	5694	5.5	1892	2.4	7586	4.2	100

Source: Bristol City Council, Adult Learning Plan 2000, based on NOMIS monthly count of unemployed claimants

These statistics are quite surprising, for each of the rates Hartcliffe's level of unemployment is less than the overall rate in Bristol. If this 3.2% rate of unemployment (in August 2000) is correct then 'official' unemployment in the area is low. This is at odds with initiatives in the Hartcliffe area. For example, in the Gatehouse Centre the TAWC project (Towards a Working Community) has been established with the aim of getting more local people into paid work. This discrepancy between the official unemployment count and the local concern with unemployed might be explained by the people these initiatives focus on. The

unemployment claimant count excludes those ineligible for jobseekers allowance, but who nevertheless may be looking for employment or be the focus of training programmes.

The Hartcliffe ward is rated 9th most deprived ward in Bristol on The Indices of Multiple Deprivation health domain index and is at the relatively high position of 1500th most deprived ward in the country. The Urban II report outlines the particular health concerns in its target area: the high demand for primary health care, the number of lone mothers in the area experiencing depression and the high rates of long term limiting illnesses and high mortality rates for under 65 year olds (Bristol Urban II 200: 15). The infant mortality rate in Hartcliffe (measured as the number of deaths of infants aged under one year per 1,000 live births) is higher than the national average and the infant mortality rate in poorer areas of Bristol is close to double that of richer areas (Bristol Evening Post 2001).

This account of the Hartcliffe area has been based on information from a wide range of sources. Details of local initiatives come from the leaflets they provide and information from internet sites. News stories in the local media and city council reports have also been used. Photographs of the area are used with the same aim as expressed by the social-medicine.com website, "[to link] what can often be prosaic and faceless statistics to the realities of everyday life" (Social-medicine.com n.d.). Parts of this discussion have been based on conversations with workers in the area and my own fieldwork observations. These observations come from the perspective of an 'outsider' and may be very different to the opinions held by local people about the area that they live in.

Appendix III

Leaflet for lone mothers

Lone Mothers in South Bristol

Lone parents are being encouraged to think about entering paid work. What do lone mothers think about this? What experience of work have they had? What do they think about childcare? Do lone mothers want to stay at home until their children are older? Are local services good enough?

Emma Head is a researcher at Bristol University and is interested in hearing the views of lone mothers.

I would like to talk to women who meet the following...

- Are a lone/single mother living with their child(ren)
- Whose youngest (or only) child is aged 6 years or under
- Lives in Hartcliffe, Withywood or Highridge

Interviews take around one hour and everything discussed will be treated in confidence. Interviews can take place in your own home or at another preferred location.
£10 will be paid for each interview.

If you are able to take part in this research or would like more information please phone Emma for more details on (0117) 9546714 or 07890 4214129.

Appendix IV

Table of interviewees

Name	Age	No. of children	Age/s of child(ren)	Insider/outsider status	Contact with Sure Start	Contact with NDLP
Ann	36	1	4 years old	Outsider	Yes	Yes
Beth	37	1	5 years old	Insider	Yes	Yes
Claire	30	1	5 years old	Insider	Yes	Yes
Donna	29	3	6 months, 3 yrs, 5yrs	Outsider	Yes	No
Elaine	45	2	1 year old, 3 years old	Outsider	Yes	No
Fiona	27	1	2 years old	Outsider	Yes	No
Gail	23	1	1 year old	Outsider	Yes	No
Helen	22	2	6 months, 2 years old	Insider	Yes	No
Isabelle	22	1	3 years old	Outsider	No	No
Joanne	21	2	2 years old, 4 years old	Insider	Yes	No
Kate	23	2	2 years old, 5 years old	Insider	Yes	No
Laura	31	1	5 years old	Outsider	Yes	Yes
Melissa	28	2	2 year old, 6 year old	Insider	Yes	No
Natalie	24	1	2 years old	Outsider	Yes	No
Paula	19	1	1 year old	Insider	Yes	No
Rebecca	17	1	8 months old	Outsider	Yes	Yes
Sharon	23	2	2 years old, 5 years old	Insider	Yes	No
Tina	18	1	1 year old	Outsider	No	No
Yvonne	19	1	1 year old	Insider	No	No
Zoe	22	1	5 year old	Insider	No	No